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A SHORT AND SAFE

# EXPEDIENT

FOR  
And All considerate and consistent  
Terminating the present Debates about  
SUBSCRIPTIONS,

Occasioned by a celebrated Performance, intituled,

The CONFSSIONAL, K

WITH

A LETTER upon a collateral Subject,

AND A  
Large APPENDIX of Authorities,  
ancient and modern;

Calculated to promote Peace and Charity, in the  
room of Speculation and Controversy.

*By a Friend to religious and civil Liberty.*

Published by BENJAMIN DAWSON, L.L.D.  
Rector of Burgh, in Suffolk.

L O N D O N:

Printed for EDWARD and CHARLES DILEY,  
in the Poultry.

M DCC LXIX.

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A SHORT AND EASY  
**EXPLANATION**  
 OF THE REVENUE OF THE CLERGY.

And All considering and consistent  
 Terminating the present Debates about  
 SUBORDINATE

Friends to the true Interest of the  
*Nos autem eo debemus esse animi, ut VERITATI agnita, et  
 sese in disputationibus satisfaciendi, ulro libenterque cedamus.*  
 Pet. Mart. in disp. Oxon.

*Quid reformatos, nihil valet auctoritas ecclesie, et ip-  
 sus definitio. Nobis integrum est, rem estimare ex aequo, et  
 ex omnibus suis momentis: Diligenter expendere, quod propendeat,  
 quod nos ducat SCRIPTURA SACRA, quod rei ipsius ratio, &c.*  
 T. Burnet, de stat. mort. c. 4.



Printed by W. Johnston, Stationer, and D.  
 Johnson, Deceased

Printed for A. W. and C. in the Strand  
 M. DCCCLXXII. AUTHOR.

To

The reverend the CLERGY,

And All considerate and consistent

PROTESTANTS,

Friends to the true Interest of the

*Church of England,*

Upon the Foundation of  
Scripture and Reason;

These humble Attempts

to serve and promote that Interest,

in the way of peace and charity,

Are,

With great Esteem, Affection, and  
Deference,

Inscribed and dedicated by

The AUTHOR.

To

The Reverend the Clergy

And All considerate and consistent

~~FOR THE~~

Friends to the true Interest of the

Upon the Foundation of

Preface Communicatory

Their humble Address

THE Editor of this Work, on  
of ancient and improved per-  
sal of the same in Manuscript, has  
judged it, on several accounts, well  
worthy the attention of the Public.  
The Design of it is truly laudable:  
It is framed in a clear, easy, con-  
vincing, and uncommonly candid  
manner: In the present state of the  
important Controversy in Scrip-  
ture



PREFACE

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*Preface Commendatory.*

**T**HE Editor of this Work, on an attentive and impartial perusal of the same in Manuscript, has judged it, on several accounts, well worthy the attention of the Public. The Design of it is truly catholic: It is penned in a clear, easy, convincing, and uncommonly candid, manner: In the present state of the important Controversy on Subscription

## P R E F A C E.

tion to human Systems of Theology, the Seasonableness of the **EXPEDIENT** proposed is sufficiently obvious.

THE Reader will find the main Object of that great and masterly Work, the **CONFSSIONAL**, kept uniformly in View — the Gospel-privilege of judging for one's-self, in matters of Religion, independently on any other Authority than God's Word, strenuously but calmly asserted and agreeably illustrated by the most respectable Authorities, — and the whole exhibiting an amiable and engaging View of the Reformed religion in general, and of the original, genuine Principles of the Church of England in particular. Without engaging at all in controversy, the Author has availed himself of the most eminent controversial Writings, to the worthiest of purposes, viz. the Promotion of a greater and firmer Union, than at present subsists, among Protestants of

P R E F A C E

of all Denominations; by reminding them of, and keeping their Attention fixed upon, this their common Principle — a Right to private Judgement — On which rational Principle, and in the true Spirit of Gospel-Liberty, as they at first rejected all Authority of the Church of Rome, over their Understandings and Consciences; so they can never, with Consistency, claim a Right to exert the like Authority over any of their Brethren.

THE Editor, at the same time that he thinks himself greatly honoured by an Appeal to his Judgement for the Publication of this truly valuable Work, takes the liberty to express his Dissent from the Writer's Opinion at page, 296. — an Opinion first made respectable, among Protestants, in the days of Laud, and much countenanced in these Days — where the interpreting the 39 Articles in the  
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## P R E F A C E.

Calvinistic sense, is considered by the Author as a Disparagement to the church of England. But this is a matter between us of mere Opinion: And in all such Difference from him or from others, I am upon his own fair Terms — “ Let the Purity and  
“ Simplicity of the Gospel be preserved,  
“ or, where otherwise modified, resto-  
“ red; I am content. Every man, for  
“ me, may still retain his own Opi-  
“ nion: And I may therefore rea-  
“ sonably desire that no man would  
“ lay a Restraint (since none has a  
“ Right to lay any) upon mine”.

April 13,  
1769.

BENJ. DAWSON

The whole and repeated...  
been made upon...  
largest number of years...

~~the whole and repeated...~~  
~~been made upon...~~  
~~largest number of years...~~

and... of religion in general, both  
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... as might naturally be expected, and  
could not well be otherwise, last evening  
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did, they have been...  
... and down in former times, to be  
no longer... and...  
... in order to the...  
to the... of revelation, which  
is... to all... and of the...  
than all human opinions. Human opi-

... and definitions...  
... have indeed had a great and general...  
and have... the minds of men...

... and human opinions. Human opi-  
... and definitions...  
... have indeed had a great and general...  
and have... the minds of men...

**W**HATEVER reasons the Church  
might have at first for enjoin-  
ing subscriptions to any of her  
forms, those reasons are, by length of time,  
and change of circumstances, considerably  
altered, and some of them seem to subsist  
no more.

... their...  
...  
How

THE close and repeated attacks that have been made upon the christian religion, for a great number of years past, by the busy and subtle advocates of infidelity, have obliged the friends of this religion to look more narrowly, than had been done in the darker ages of the church, into the grounds and evidences of religion in general; both natural and revealed. The consequence was, as might reasonably be expected, and could not well be otherwise, that examining those grounds with the accuracy they did, they saw some, perhaps not a few, positions laid down in former systems, to be no longer tenable, and therefore of necessity to be given up, in order to do justice to the grand scheme of revelation, which is superior to all systems, and of far greater consequence to be preserved and supported, than any human opinions. Human opinions, and definitions in matters of faith, have indeed had a great and general run, and have captivated the minds of multitudes, in almost every age of the christian church. But these opinions, these definitions, are of much inferior consideration, in comparison with the divine oracles; which alone are the rule of faith to christians, and which alone, comparatively speaking, deserve their regard, and can claim their submission.

How



How surprising then is it, to observe the prejudices of many, even of learned men sometimes, in favour of their respective systems of education? not forgetting indeed the scriptures, nor disowning them to be a superior rule, yet seeming to pay less deference to them, in point of opinions and authorised tenets, — than might reasonably be expected. There is no other way to account for this preposterous manner of proceeding, than by imputing it to the first impressions made upon their minds, when they were less capable of judging about such matters. Having been trained up in them, and strongly addicted to them, from their early years, it is not so easy to part with them (especially if they happen to find their temporal interests connected with them,) in their ripen age.

Many noble discoveries have for some time been made, and are still making, in favour of the sacred oracles, and in confirmation of their truth and excellence. And it may be hoped, that great success will in time attend the generous inquiries which are now carried on, both to recover the original text where it hath unhappily been depraved in former ages, and to acquire new and stronger proofs upon the whole, that this revelation is indeed from

God. And being his, originally proceeding from him alone, and established by his sole and sovereign authority, it is evidently incapable of any human additions, nor will bear adulterations of any kind; and it would be no less than presumption to obtrude upon it any such novel devices, making That to be esteemed the Word of God, which is in reality but the invention of Man.

THIS being the case, we can no longer adhere to human systems, where they are inconsistent with the divine; nor indeed ought we to be very fond of retaining them, whatever inducements we may have, on some considerations (which are sufficiently obvious) to continue them still in our keeping; since in so inquisitive and discerning an age, they do manifest disservice to our religion, give great advantage against it to its enemies, and draw upon ourselves no small censure and obloquy.

THE exigencies of the times, for certain, do openly and repeatedly call upon us to *re-consider* these things, to give our religion its full scope, and to dismiss, in the fairest manner we can, all unnecessary restraints, every discouragement to honest inquiry, every thing injurious to christian liberty, every

very thing disreputable to our church as protestants.

Wise men see how the case stands; and can only lament an unhappiness which they have it not in their power to remedy. At least, a total remedy is more than we can expect at once, how much soever religion suffers for the want of it, and impositions are a burden to it, and to many of the most conscientious men who profess it.

WHAT is now to be done, in order, on the one hand, to rescue the religion of Christ from impositions, and do credit to its profession; and, on the other, to secure to the church a set of Ministers, able and desirous to discharge its sacred offices with honour, according to the evangelical purity, and recommend their Master's doctrine to the world by the purity of their morals?

THE different parties engaged in the present controversy (occasioned by that uncommon, but not unseasonable remonstrance, the CONFSSIONAL,) seem to agree, that there ought to be some religious *test* of the fitness of persons applying to be admitted into the ministry, and intrusted with the care of souls.

— The opinion appears to be reasonable,



able, and such a test, all things considered, may be really necessary, but with a proviso that it be discreetly ordered, being settled on a *large* foundation, and that it no way infringe the just rights of christian liberty.

WHAT may be the *best* plan, or the least exceptionable and incommodious to this purpose, I cannot presume to say; nor has the matter, as far as I know, been as yet adjusted, to mutual satisfaction, and general approbation, by the several disputants.

If I may be allowed the liberty, after these high and warm debates, to offer my own sentiment upon the subject, leaving to all others the liberty of theirs, my humble conception of the matter, at present, is this.

THE established forms, to which subscriptions are hitherto required, being supposed to continue as they are, till authority shall think fit to render them more suitable upon the whole to the large and comprehensive plan of the New Testament, a declaration and promise, drawn up in some such words as the following (extracted principally from the Sponsions at Ordination in the Church of England) might well be thought

thought sufficient to answer all the reasonable purposes, for which any engagements of this kind can be judged either necessary or useful, before admission into the pastoral charge at first, or removal to a new one afterwards.

I profess myself a *Christian* and a *Protestant*; sincerely believing the Christian religion, as delivered in the holy Scriptures, to be from God; and disclaiming all connection with the church of Rome, as having corrupted that religion, and deviated from the Scriptures, in matters, not a few, of the greatest consequence.

BEING persuaded that the Scriptures, without any human additions or innovations, do contain the whole will of God relating to the salvation of Man, through faith in Jesus Christ, I am determined, with the help of God, to adhere invariably to those Scriptures, and out of them, and agreeably to them, to instruct the people who are or shall be committed to my charge, in the true christian religion, as there delivered; teaching nothing as the religion of Christ, and necessary to salvation, but what, upon diligent examination, and a careful comparing of the whole together, I shall be persuaded to be the

<sup>t</sup> rue meaning and design of those sacred writings, as the same are received, and acknowledged to be canonical, by the church of England (a).

AND I do promise, ———

THAT in order to a due progress and improvement in the qualifications of a christian Minister, I will (b) be diligent in prayers, in reading and considering the holy Scriptures, and in such other proper studies, as may help to the farther knowledge of the same; laying aside the study of the world and the flesh, as unsuitable to such a profession and character.

THAT in regard to my more immediate duty towards the people of my charge, I will use both public and private admonitions, as well to the sick as to the whole, within my cure, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given.

[THAT I will be diligent to frame and fashion myself, [and family] according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both

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(a) Vid. 6th article.

(b) Vid. Office of Ordination of Priests.



myself and them, as much as in me lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ:]

And finally,

THAT I will set forwards, to the best of my power, quietness, peace and love, among all christian people, and especially among those, who are or shall be committed to my spiritual charge and care.

To these declarations and promises, freely, voluntarily, and deliberately made by me, I set my hand this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year of our Lord \_\_\_\_\_.

A. B.

SOME declarations and engagements of this or the like kind, will, I presume, appear to candid and unprejudiced men, to be not only unexceptionable, but fully sufficient to answer all the reasonable purposes of admitting persons into the ministry, and committing to them the care of souls; and that, in any church or community whatsoever professing itself protestant, and renouncing the errors and superstitions of the church of Rome.

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It is possible indeed that in a church or community where wealth and preferments are annexed to the sacred office, there will be some, who, notwithstanding the best precautions, will intrude into the ministry, in order to share in its emoluments, tho' they have not the least relish for its duties, nor perhaps any one proper qualification to fit them for such an office.—But then, such persons having made such solemn professions (we will suppose before the Bishop and others,) and confirmed the same under their hands, do at once forfeit their character, and violate their conscience, and, upon both accounts, become justly contemptible to, and detested by, all men of discernment and probity that know them.—Nor is this all; they render themselves liable to ecclesiastical censures; and it is certain that the governors of the church have power vested in them to deprive scandalous clergymen, both of their office, and of their benefice; their continuing to exercise the one, and retain the other, depending upon their *good behaviour*, and neither of them being irrevocable; nor is it fit they should be.

On the other hand, those serious, honest and worthy persons, who, having well studied the christian religion, are convinced of  
its

its excellence, and, having imbibed its genuine spirit and temper, are sincerely desirous to promote it in the world, can, I think, have no possible scruple or objection to any article in the form above exhibited, or to the contents of any other form drawn up on the same large and unclogging foundation. So far from this, that such men will freely and readily, and *vere ex animo*, make and sign such a profession, and keep to their engagements; nor will they fail, by fulfilling them, to do credit to their ministry, and secure the success of it.

AND we may, I think, safely trust such men, that they will never oppose, contradict or disparage, either publicly or privately, any of our stated forms, whether articles, liturgy, or homilies, but, as becomes men of sense and prudence, and friends to peace as well as piety, acquiesce, whilst they can do it with a good conscience, in what they find established by the laws of the realm; tho' their acquiescence and conformity herein, does not, I apprehend, so far tie them down, as that they shall never, on any occasion, be at liberty to address their superiors, in an humble and dutiful manner, for a moderate review and amendment of what may be justly, and is generally, by judicious and disinterested men,



men, thought to be amiss, inconvenient, or inexpedient, in any of those forms.

If any minister or ministers, shall presume to take farther liberty than this, and shew themselves pragmatistical, troublesome or impertinent, in these or the like respects, they may be convened before their superiors, and, continuing incorrigible, after due admonitions, may be discharged from their ministry.

So that, upon all these considerations put together, it would seem, that the church may as well or better be provided with faithful and able ministers to teach the religion of Christ in its purity, upon the plan here proposed, or another to the same effect, *without* subscription to articles of faith or opinion, compiled and enacted by any human authority. For why? they give you all the assurance you can well have, or reasonably desire, considering the imperfections of mankind, that they will be true to their trust, and discharge their duty honestly; teaching nothing as the doctrine of Christ, but what they really believe to have been taught by him, and to be agreeable to his will, as declared and made known by himself and his apostles. — If this be not sufficient to secure true religion to the church,

church, and to open and enlarge mens minds with just and liberal notions of it, agreeable to the attributes of God, the reason of man, and the christian gospel, I profess freely, I do not know, nor can well conceive, what is or can be so.

As to proposing to men, or (what is common enough in some protestant societies, both at home and abroad) requiring them, at their entrance upon a ministerial charge, to make declarations of their faith, according to certain received systems, from which they must not deviate, I own I can have no favourable opinion of such a course prescribed, and cannot but wish, as many intelligent and worthy persons in these societies do, that it were totally and at once laid aside, as being in reality, tho' not acknowledged by some, injurious to the religion of Christ, preventing its growth, and obstructing or retarding that "free course," which it ought to have among all that profess it, and among all nations where it is hitherto unknown.

WE know the good effects that attended the friendly remonstrances, and discreet proposals, of Dr. Burnet to the churches of Switzerland; who find themselves happy to this day, and probably always will in  
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the relaxation they made, some years after, at his request.

AND with regard to the articles of our own church, to which subscription is required at ordinations and institutions, let it be fairly and impartially considered,

WHETHER our good reformers, in the very infancy of the reformation, when they were but just emerging out of the abyss of popery, and could as yet see things (even some things of considerable moment to their cause) but as in a kind of twilight, and through a clouded and disturbed atmosphere, did well, and very advisedly, or did not rather act somewhat prematurely, in assuming to themselves the authority they did, to sit in judgement upon causes not as yet sufficiently discussed, and cleared from uncertainties; and venturing to think and judge for others, even for the latest posterity?

WHETHER there be not divers instances upon record, of their imperfection in scripture-knowledge, and other sciences; both since improved to a degree far beyond any thing they could then have imagined? And whether therefore they did right, in that state of immaturity, and continual hurry,

to



to prescribe a system of faith and doctrine, consisting of a great variety of controverted propositions, to be a standing rule and perpetual test of opinions, and even of consciences; and to incumber divines with a set of notions, tho' not yet proved, which they should submit to as sacred truths, and look upon as maxims never to be contradicted?

Whether this conduct towards inferiours, was not an assumption of magisterial authority beyond equity; was not an usurpation upon mens natural rights, and the privilege of their understandings; was not incroaching upon their liberty of private judgment; pre-occupying their intellects, forestalling their judgment, prepossessing their minds with sentiments which were not of their own native growth and culture; precluding and laying a restraint upon their future studies and inquiries, and particularly their searches into the holy scripture, endeavouring to investigate the true sense thereof, to rescue it from false glosses, and by their critical and sound knowledge in things divine, to render themselves "able ministers of the New Testament"?—Finally, whether the whole of this proceeding, was not an imposition which our reformers had no right, no authority from their great Master,

ster, to exercise over their fellow servants(c).

Would it not have been sufficient for these great leaders, to have exhibited their *own* thoughts, to have shewed to the world, what

(c) "At the time of the reformation (as one properly remarks) learning was but just beginning to revive. The church was then emerging out of the grossest darkness and corruption; and our divines had been much more conversant with the quibbles of the schools, than with the doctrines of the gospel. Is it then to be supposed, that their minds could be at once completely illuminated? that they could immediately ascertain the genuine principles of the christian religion? This, it is certain, can never be accomplished, without a critical knowledge of the New Testament, with which knowledge our fore fathers, of the sixteenth century, were but meanly furnished. Since the time of the reformation, we can venture to say, that great improvements have been made in theological learning." — Therefore to impede the course, or stop the progress of that learning, or to make the theological learning of that age to be the standard of ours, and to tie us down to any narrow tenets or systems prevailing in those times, would be doing an injury to our reason and religion, and laying us under restraints which God and Nature and the christian revelation have not laid us under. It would, in short, be much the same upon the whole, as attempting to "re-establish the Aristotelian philosophy, or to abolish the arts and sciences, which have been invented since the reign of Queen Elizabeth." — What a fine piece of work would either of these attempts make, in these days of greater light, and nobler discoveries?

what were their own opinions, what their religion, what their doctrine, what their mode of worship, what their rule of church government,—in short, what the church of England was, as distinguished and reformed from popery (as was afterwards done in a full and clear manner by the excellent Bishop Jewel (d), without requiring *subscription* from others, tho' they might very well, and very properly, have subscribed these things *themselves*, to give them the greater sanction?—And such a sanction might have rendered all other subscriptions needless, provided men going into orders, or being instituted into benefices, would freely and willingly make and subscribe some such declarations and promises, as those which have above been submitted to consideration.

NOR think, notwithstanding what I have said, that I am averse to all declarations of faith. I have just now intimated the contrary. My humble opinion, in short, is this:

THERE may very fairly, I think, be a public declaration of faith and union, in any church or religious community, without requiring any formal subscriptions. The  
C whole

(d) *Apology of the church of England.*



whole of true religion, both as to doctrine and practice (for I would comprehend *both*) might be set forth in a narrow compass, and in the plainest words. And indeed, for my own part, I could rather wish that such a declaration, if any, should be exhibited in words of *Scripture*; which might well and easily be done, proposing only to point out the grand principles and duties of religion as there delivered, and being intitled, *A summary view of the christian religion as professed and taught in the church or churches of, &c.*

BE pleased to note. Most men and most churches, in drawing up their systematical formularies of confession, have unhappily made religion to consist chiefly in *opinions* and tenets, and those often couched in terms of doubtful disputation, overlooking the while, or paying less regard to, the great *design* of Christianity, in the genuine spirit, tempers and graces, and most important duties and practice, of this divine religion; tho' these be, in a manner, all in all, and would much sooner and more effectually unite men in their religious profession as a community of christians and sincere believers, than any *other* methods or schemes of union: Which, as hitherto generally managed, have rather widened than  
closed

closed the breaches proposed to be made up by them.

In short,

ABSTRUSE points, scholastic notions, and terms of art, unknown to the sacred scriptures, will never unite christians; — nor will any impositions whatsoever of this kind. The only way is, to go directly to the fountain-head, to draw from thence our sentiments of revealed religion, to be wisely and thankfully content therewith, and, instead of narrowing our foundation, to enlarge our charity.

THAT our charity is not enlarged, but rather contracted by *controversy*, I can, I think, be pretty sure; if from no other instances, yet from some part or parts of that which is now carried on upon the subject of *subscriptions*. Which will always be the case, where the foundation is not made *large* enough at first, or where the points to be subscribed, are either obscure and intricate in themselves, or expressed in terms not sufficiently clear and adequate; or where the doctrine asserted is doubtful, and may be justly thought to exceed the bounds of “that which is written”. In either case, discontent, complaints, re-

monstrances, and bickerings, will be in a manner inevitable. The causes remaining, the consequences will ensue in course.

How far this may be the case with some of our articles, or any other points to which subscription is required, I need not here suggest: The effects are visible, and every wise and good man laments the causes, wishing they may in due time, by the most feasible and prudent management, be either totally removed, or at least permitted to remain in a state of rest, and unnoticed; having no farther power to create contentions.

WITH regard to those which are at present on foot upon these topics, we cannot but think it unhappy, that such misunderstandings, breaches of love, irritations of temper, trials of skill, and incivilities, should subsist among brethren: — among fellow-christians, fellow-protestants, fellow-subjects, and fellow-clergymen; all educated in, and continuing members of, the same reformed church; and also, we may suppose, sharing more or less in its emoluments.

It is much to be wished, that in all matters of dispute between such men, the disagreeing parties would write, in a manner,  
and



and with a temper, becoming persons of liberal education, and never give way to any of those ill humours and passions, how common soever in modern controversies, which are a disgrace to their profession, and a contradiction to their religion.

I should expect of men of this character, discussing a point of theology, to be always civil and decent towards each other, free and ingenuous, not imperious and dogmatical, and stiff in their opinions, and (what is the natural consequence of such stiffness, and too frequently seen in overbearing disputants) impatient of contradiction.

In debates between learned and civilized men, every thing little, low and mean; every degree of prevarication and shuffling; every art of evading the force of an argument, of raising dust, perplexing the subject, exciting the passions, or throwing odium upon an opponent; should with a greatness of mind be disdained and avoided; and every thing *foreign* to the main point in view: Which alone should be kept to, and steadily pursued; and always will be so, where men sincerely aim at truth, and have no private interests in view, no personal pique, no secret spleen or antipathy

against an adversary, and are not attached, as most disputants are, to systematical prejudices, and old party-opinions.

DISPUTES would then be much shorter and clearer than they generally are, and impartial inquirers would more readily discern on which side of a question the real merits of the cause did chiefly lie.

To close up the whole of these reflections.

It is too well known by men conversant in history, how much detriment hath been done to the christian religion, and to the church of Christ, by the imposition of certain tenets and systems of faith, and by too rigorously insisting upon subscriptions to them. Foreign churches have sufficiently experienced the ill effects of those unsalutary measures. Our own hath suffered, more than it hath been benefited, by such proceedings. Ever since articles and subscriptions have been laid upon the clergy of this church, professing protestant freedom, there have been dislikes, reluctances, and remonstrances against them, as incroaching upon that freedom. Our parliament alone gave authority to those injunctions: Our parliament can order that they shall be no more

more a burden. — The injunctions being dropped, the contests will drop of course, and all, in this respect, will be easy, and upon a fair footing.

It may become wise and honourable patriots, to inquire into the matter, to sift it thorowly, to set forth the hardships of impositions, to use their interest with men in authority, to exert their reasonings in favour of christian liberty, and freedom of judgement; and, in short, to prevail, if possible, or as far as possible, in the way of prudence, and at a proper season, that a public motion may be made to this purpose. — Their generous endeavours, and desirreable success herein, if that success may be attained, would oblige numbers of the most conscientious, learned, and reputable clergy in the nation; would do credit and service to the church of England; and the greatest honour to themselves, as its best friends and patrons.

THE late acts for regulating marriages, and altering the style, tho' they have affected some of our rubrics; — and the act for allowing farther time to clergymen to take the oaths to the government after institution; give us some reasonable hope, that



our august senate will at last regard, pity, and relieve us, in the present case; which seems to merit their attention, and claim their compassion, as much or more than any other of this kind.

*A word to the disputants on both sides  
of the question.*

ONE thing is particularly observable in the conduct of the gentlemen who have engaged against the *Confessional*, that they have never yet entered into the true and full merit of the cause, but seem to have studiously declined it, keeping for the most part, or very often, the grand question out of sight, and deviating to inferior topics, which are of little or no concern to the main point in dispute, and serve only to perplex the subject, and lengthen out the contests about it : A way of proceeding, in my opinion, unbecoming generous minds, and friends to truth; and, what is more, not like to do service, in the end, to any cause. So far from this, that men of discernment, who seek for truth only in the midst of disputes, and will not be put off with shifts and evasions, will judge from hence, that the cause espoused by those writers, how warmly soever prosecuted by them, labours under difficulties which cannot fairly be removed; especially when maintained by men of known abilities in other branches of science, and who evidently want not the greatest good will  
to

to set off this article, in their sense of it, to the best advantage: And it may reasonably be presumed, they have hitherto done all in their power to secure their ends.

ON the other hand, I cannot but observe, with a sensible concern, that some of those who have engaged on the opposite side, have rather gone out of their way sometimes, to obviate or invalidate certain objections of their adversaries, by which the main cause, it is thought, was very little, if at all affected, and therefore the objections themselves were as little regarded by those readers, who would not suffer their attention to be drawn off, by such diversions, from that great and only object of their enquiries.

THE cause of truth, when clearly laid open to the world, and supported by proper arguments, stands in need of no defence, unless on very urgent occasions, and in regard to some particulars of moment; and will, for the most part, make its way by degrees, and gain the approbation of candid and disinterested men, without such digressions to secure it. Which, nevertheless, I speak not in disparagement of the learned advocates of this cause: A cause that will always stand its ground, and will always



always be abetted by able coadjutors, so long as it shall appear to be consonant to scripture and right reason, and shall be conducted in a discreet and becoming manner. For why? It is the cause of liberty, and of the right of private judgement (a right unalienable from us as men and christians) and even of the protestant reformation itself; which is a most invaluable blessing: A cause therefore to be steadily adhered to, and firmly maintained, by all who profess themselves protestants, and never to be given up by such men, on any considerations whatsoever. — This is the cause, and this alone, which lies now under consideration, and which therefore ought alone to be discussed; all matters foreign to it, being excluded on both sides.

I have the pleasure to observe, that some of those gentlemen, who have militated in the support, and also in the defence, of this cause, have kept close to their point, and argued with perspicuity as well as propriety; and their arguments have been favourably received by the public. — For my own part, being persuaded that this is the only way to bring the debate to a speedy and just conclusion, I would presume to advise, at least I wish, that the writers  
who

who have insisted themselves on the side of liberty, and in support of the first and best principle of our reformation, would, for the future, be pleased to contract their labours, by confining their arguments, and, as far as they well can, reducing those of their opponents, to the single point on which this great question turns, and was at first proposed to be considered by fair examiners.

GENTLEMEN, (I address myself to the maintainers of this noble cause) If you are disposed to pay any regard to my friendly suggestion, Call back the evaders, to the first and grand point in debate, and tie them closely to this, to this only; nor stir one step out of your way, to run a wild-goose chase after them, through their various windings and turnings; of which there will be no end(e). Keep to this your paladium, your strong-hold, your

*Capitoll immobile saxum,*

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(e) "What hope can a man, who commits himself with such opponents, have, that the controversy will ever be brought to a fair issue, or indeed to any issue at all? Or who that can employ himself with any sort of advantage either to himself or the public in studies of another sort, would waste his fleeting hours in such fruitless altercation?" Occasional remarks, 1768, p. 50.

and

and let your opponents continue to batter and attempt to overthrow it, as much as they please, or can. We shall then see, in a short time, and with little trouble of reading and canvassing, on which side the *truth* doth really or chiefly lie, and consequently, *which* of the two opinions (whether for, or against, the controverted requisitions) we ought to approve of most, and accordingly to acquiesce in. For it is fit we should determine our judgement, upon the best evidences we can discern; and surely it is now time, that we should be permitted to set our minds at rest. — Otherwise, If, in too much complaisance to your antagonists, you turn aside to join issue with them in points that are little or nothing to the purpose, how much sorer soever they may make about them, you will only remind us of *Atalanta's* stooping to pick up the golden apples, designedly thrown in her way to retard her course; and her ill success, in so doing, will only give you the cold comfort to foresee, that your own success, in the end, will be no better; and, instead of strengthening, you will weaken your forces, and confirm those of your adversaries.

SHORT





( 38 )

SHORT  
STRICTURES  
UPON MODERN  
ORTHODOXY,  
AND ITS  
CLAIMS.

Addressed to a warm, but well-meaning  
Advocate for both.

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*Hac in re scilicet unâ  
Multum dissimiles, ad cætera pæni gemelli,  
Fraternis animis.*

HOR.

STRICTURES

AND

ORTHODOXY,  
STRICTURES, &c.

AND

C. L. A. I. M. S.

THESE strictures were drawn up some  
years ago, on a particular occasion  
(with which the writer has no concern)  
and are now advanced in the foregoing  
essay, as they purport to be the same  
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ment.

The freedom here used in some things,  
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of some apology. But with candid and  
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THESE strictures were drawn up some years ago, on a particular occasion (with which the reader hath no concern) and are now subjoined to the foregoing essay, as they pursue, in the main, the same subject, tho' in a different manner, and do tend to illustrate and inforce the same argument.

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**P**

S I R,

S I R,

FREEDOM of inquiry into the original and genuine sense of Scripture, appears to me, as I said, to be inconsistent with those demands of rigid orthodoxy, which you with so much warm zeal insisted on as necessary, in the conversation we had together the other day.

THE church of Rome, you know, Sir, forbids such inquiry, and allows no other sense of Scripture to be held or taught within her pale, but that which is held and taught, and impressed with her infallible sanction, in the articles and definitions of her fam'd council of Trent. Which articles and definitions every ecclesiastic, and many laymen, of that communion, are obliged to subscribe, and swear to maintain, as indubitable verities, against all opponents. See the articles and form of oath decreed and enjoined by that synod.

BUT in a protestant church like ours (which is asserted to be the glory as well as bulwark of the reformation) it may reasonably be asked, Whether we ought, in any instance or degree, to follow the rule of that imperious, incroaching, fanatical,

tical, heretical, and unchristian church of the seven hills, in such matters; or indeed in any other, wherein that church (if we may still allow it that name) hath so evidently departed from the faith and religion of Jesus Christ, revealed to us in the New Testament? a religion which (as a late worthy and very sensible Nobleman took notice) "is every way agreeable to the nature and attributes of God, and conduce to the happiness of Man, if (said he) learned men would let us have it just as Christ and his Apostles delivered it".

THE church of England, I am very sure, doth allow and encourage us, as our Saviour and his Apostles do, to "search the scriptures", whether the things proposed to us by men, as doctrines of faith, be doctrines revealed to us by God? And forbids us to receive or teach any doctrine, or other tenets, as necessary to salvation, but what we find and believe in our consciences to be agreeable to the written word of God, or (in true reasoning) deducible from thence, considering that sacred word in its full latitude, and uniform analogy.

SEE our sixth article, with the xxth, xxist, and some others: Also the responses and engagements in the Ordination of



*Priests, &c.* and a great variety of passages to the same effect in our *liturgy* and *homilies*.

HERE then we seem to stand upon sure ground. Else our church must be supposed to be inconsistent with itself, and cannot be averred to stand upon the original and only just ground of its reformation from popery. Which reformation was evidently founded upon the principle of free inquiry, and the natural and christian right of private judgement. Take away this freedom, this right, you relapse again to popery, and may impose upon us what doctrines, what tenets, what ordinances you please.

IN many things we are still true and consistent protestants; in others, perhaps, hardly so.

Do we not give noble and deserved encouragements to our most learned men, to "search the scriptures", and endeavour to ascertain the true reading and true sense of those oracles of God?

Well: what is the consequence?

THOSE worthy gentlemen, to whom we are so extremely obliged for their generous

rous undertakings, indefatigable labours, and manifest success, do point out to us the true reading and true sense.

What are we the better for this?

ALL sensible, judicious, and unprejudiced divines and others, agree to, and readily and gladly adopt, that true sense and true reading, when sufficiently discovered and proved to them.

BUT here comes in an embargo, a *Ne plus ultra*: (Break through them, if you can, consistently.) — You have before subscribed to articles, to a form of liturgy, to a set of homilies, and all and singular the contents of each. — You now find, upon fair inquiry, that the genuine sense of scripture, as clearly and solidly discovered to you by those able, ingenuous and candid men, is in some instances, perhaps in many, not delivered to you (in the prescribed formularies) in that *true* and *genuine* sense, but in a different; — in a sense that you cannot perhaps easily and justly reconcile to that original sense of Scripture.

WHAT are you now to do? — Apply to your superiors in the church? They have often, and very humbly and dutifully been

applied to. And yet no remedy, perhaps but little attention or regard. And if what is generally affirmed, be true, you are to expect none. Matters must be kept *tight*. Rules must be reinforced, and pressed more closely. We have bent the stick, we are told, too far, and must now give it rather a different bent; lest we run out too far into freedom of thought and accurate inquiry, and discover too much by both, to the prejudice of our authorized tenets, and long accustomed forms, tho' we cannot, if we exercise our rational faculties, but discern the imperfections of each.

Is not this somewhat hard, and inconsistent with the profession of true protestants? and also of a church professing the protestant religion? a church which on repeated occasions, and very justly, declares to the world, that things not rightly settled, or found upon experience to be inconvenient, and prejudicial to the interest of true religion, are alterable, and, occasion so requiring, ought to be altered. And is there *no* occasion now?—not the least? when it is so evident, that the genuine sense of scripture is discovered, and even proved beyond just dispute, and yet our articles, &c. as you hear it urged against us, do tie us down to a different sense, a sense that we can no longer



longer maintain, and conscientiously insist upon, as what we verily believe to be the true and only sense of scripture?

THE original and native sense of scripture, we can well maintain and defend against all the adversaries of revelation. But doctrines or opinions merely human, and not really, tho' seemingly, founded on scripture, we cannot. Those adversaries have the advantage of us here, and we cannot help it. They see this with pleasure, and attack us in this weak part with a success, which we are ashamed to observe, but dare not own. Is this a desirable situation for rational men and christians to be in? to see truth, and approve it, and yet not be at liberty to maintain it? to discern our liberty by the laws of God, and yet be checked in that liberty, by the laws of Man?

*Pudet hac opprobria Clero.*

I go on farther.

HAVE we not had several reviews and reforms of our liturgy, since the first publication of it? And were those reforms and reviews needless? — And pray, Sir, let me be allowed to ask, Is there not as much need now as ever, or rather more (considering our vast attainments in scrip-

ture-knowledge since the days of our reformers) that we should revise and reform again? I mean in things that seem absolutely necessary, in present circumstances, to be looked into afresh, and reduced to the true test, the true standard.

BUT we have, you say, a standard of orthodoxy already settled; and from that standard, you add, we must not deviate, not an hair's breadth.

COME then, Sir, to your choice. Either keep to this standard of your orthodoxy; or else, go back again to the holy scripture, the truest and most solid standard of original christian theology. You cannot, I suppose, very consistently hold both, or be at the devotion of both alike. You will either *love the one, &c.*

IF you are convinced, as you cannot, I think, forbear to be, that the true sense of Scripture hath of late years, in several instances of moment, been emancipated out of the chains of ignorance and the unhappy prejudices of former times, Why will you keep our church still fettered in those chains? Why not allow it the liberty wherewith Christ, the supreme head of it, hath made it free? And will you think it

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an honour to you, or safe, or agreeable to the judgement that shall be past in the great day, to be found of the number of those, who knowingly and designedly, and with their eyes open, do "hold the truth in unrighteousness?" — *bonâ interim conscientia fremente intus, et objurgante, saltem susurrante meliora.*

THERE remains, in my humble opinion, no other alternative now but this: — Either revise and reform what is really wrong, and disagreeable to scripture, or speak out openly to the world, that the scripture is *not* your rule of faith and doctrine. — And, in that case, make, we would intreat you, and your likeminded friends,

*A proposal to the public, to reduce the sacred scripture to the standard of your orthodoxy, as contained in your various forms and definitions.* — If you do this, Sir, you act in character, and may, if I mistake not, expect many abettors to your proposal. But then, you plainly shew to the world, either that orthodoxy, as conveyed down to you in these authoritative determinations of our reformers, is, in your opinion, the true and only doctrine of scripture, and the test of right judgement in points of theology; or else, whatever may be the real



real merit of the cause, and the truth of things, — that you find it to be at least expedient, if not also necessary, on some accounts, at this time, to stick close to the *old* opinions, and require them to be professed as divine truths (we do not now inquire into the private sentiments of those professors) by all who are admitted into holy orders, or raised to preferments, in this church. — If, upon other accounts, you do not think it prudent to make the proposal above suggested, you must give leave to those friends who cannot agree with you (they have a right to this favour) to continue in their persuasion, their firm and unalterable resolution, That the *Scripture* is the Only rule of faith to Christians and Protestants, and that no power, no authority upon earth can make That to be the sense of scripture, which originally was *not* so.

If you say, We assert, as well as you, that the *Scripture* is the only rule of faith to Christians and Protestants, only the church has a right to determine the sense of scripture, and point it out to them; I would humbly answer, that if this be the case, the scripture is *not* the only rule of faith to Christians and Protestants. — If *you* take the liberty to interpret Scripture  
for

for me, and have authority to do so, your interpretation is my rule, and not the Scripture; whose *real* sense may be very different from yours, and very probably is so in some material articles. And if the *real* sense of Scripture, and your *imposed* sense be different, pray, Which am I to prefer? Which to embrace, and Which to reject?

TILL this is decided, you must give me leave to think, that instead of One rule of faith, I have now Two, or rather, that I have no rule at all in this case, and then may become an easy prey to any crafty popish or other seducer. — I only throw all these short hints; which you may consider and pursue farther at your leisure.

S I R,

AFTER all the freedom I have taken with you and your sentiments, so different from mine, in this letter (which freedom I know your good nature and friendly regard for me, will readily pardon) I can and do assure you, that my esteem and affection for you remain the same they ever have been, during our nine years acquaintance, and the many friendly offices that have passed between us, in the course of that time. — I really believe you to be a good man, and  
diligent

diligent in your calling, and do only wish you to be somewhat more consistent, and more charitable, than you seem to me to be, in some of your sentiments.

MAY God direct us both for the best, and grant we may meet with joy in a better world than this; where the true servants of God, however they may have differed in certain opinions here, will be of one heart and one mind, in one communion, hereafter; all speculative notions and conjectures, and imagined acquisitions in scholastic theology, and the art of disputing, then giving way to nobler attainments; and faith, however glorious, being swallowed up in intuition, and greater glory.

I am,

SIR,

Your very affectionate servant.

THE worthy person to whom this letter was addressed, was remarkable, and almost singular, in one thing, viz. that he had never read, and had always cautiously declined reading, any thing that would interfere



terfere with his settled opinions upon these points, not in the least doubting but they were all right, and incapable of being altered for the better. I am not at liberty to say more now, than that he freely read, and fairly considered, what was laid before him; nor have I ever had any occasion to repent of what I here wrote to him.

of God, however they may have differed in certain opinions here, will be of one heart and one mind, in one communion, heretics, all speculative notions and conjectures, and imagined acquisitions in scholastic theology, and the art of disputing, then giving the way to good sense, and faith, however glorious, being swallowed up in immolation, and greater glory.

I am

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APPEN-  
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# A P P E N D I X:

BEING

A COLLECTION of OBSERVATIONS  
tending to illustrate and inforce some of  
the principal points considered in the  
foregoing papers, and prejudicial to its

AND TO

Remove the Ground of Debates about  
ECCLESIASTICAL MATTERS.

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*Quaquam apud bonos judices satis habeant firmitatis,  
vel testimonia sine argumentis, vel argumenta sine testi-  
moniis; nos tamen non contenti alterutro sumus, cum sup-  
petat nobis utrumque; ne cui perversè ingenioso, aut non  
intelligendi, aut contra differendi, locum relinquamus.  
Lactant. Instit. l. 4.*

“Let us be careful to search out, and ready to  
embrace the truth, wherever we find it. So shall our  
lives be orthodox, tho’ perhaps our faith should not”.  
*Abp. Wake, def. ag. M. de Meaux.*



# A Philosophical Inquiry X:

It may be matter of doubt whether the Christian religion hath not suffered more from its professors, than from its adversaries: the former having been more zealous of its distinction, and more diligent in its propagation, than the latter in its defence, and prejudicial to its interest: As (to give some few instances out of many) by their about repetitions of this religion in their public writings; by their framing systems of it according to their several notions and prejudices; by their insisting in adhering to those systems, and obstinately defending them, however cross, however unintelligible, however inconsistent, by magnificently imposing, where they could, by any means, upon others, and making them their own, and so forth. These things, and many more of the same kind, have done more to divide and weaken the Christian religion, than all the efforts of its adversaries could have done. And yet, notwithstanding this, the Christian religion is still the most powerful and extensive religion in the world. This is owing to the goodness of the religion itself, and to the wisdom of its professors, who have been able to overcome all the difficulties and objections that have been made against it. And this is the only religion that has been able to do so.

## *Advertisement.*

**I**T may be matter of doubt whether the christian religion hath not suffered more from its professors, than from its adversaries; the former having too often done it the utmost disservice, by pursuing measures disagreeable to its precepts, inconsistent with its design, and prejudicial to its interest: As (to give some few instances out of many) by their absurd representations of this religion in their public writings; by their framing systems of it according to their several fancies and prejudices; by their stiffness in adhering to those systems, and obstinately defending them, however gross, however unintelligible, however indefensible; by magisterially imposing, where they had power, their arbitrary tests, and favourite opinions, upon others; and excluding from their several inclosures those who could not fall in with their notions, approve of their definitions, nor set their hand to their forms; — and above all, by that ill temper, those ill manners, those arts of chicanery, dissingenuity, fencing, evading, shifting, undermining, and other low and unbecoming methods of controversy, which they have too commonly shewn in their disputes with each other; to the disgrace

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of

of their profession, the ridicule of unbelievers, and the concern and regret of serious and judicious christians.

THE suggesting proper means towards abating in some measure, and gradually removing, these unhappy obstructions to the progress of religion, and setting it forth to the world in its true light, is, I apprehend, doing it credit as well as service, in an irreligious and contentious age. And the following collection is designed for this purpose, being a friendly attempt to turn controversy into civility, and speculation into practice : which is the principal design of all true religion, and ought to be the object ultimately in view, in the management of every controversy about it.

THOSE who love to see religion in its native purity, stripped of all heterogeneous mixtures and all superfluous additions, with which men have sullied and defaced it, may here see the whole of it in one view, and in a narrow compass : and in the collateral articles, the curious may find a variety of particulars, which may perhaps suit their taste, and prove instructive to their minds.

S E C T.



of their profession, the subject of unbelief  
years, and the concern and interest of serious  
and judicious Christians (see).

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The main points, or chief articles, of the  
christian religion, few and plain. Scrip-  
ture the only rule of faith to protestants.  
S. E. C. T. I.

The main points, or chief articles, of the  
christian religion, few and plain. Scrip-  
ture the only rule of faith to protestants.

Declarations of learned men on these  
heads.

1. "CERTA semper sunt in paucis, et  
quicquid ad salutem christiano-  
rum scitu necessarium est, quicquid nos me-  
liores beatioreque facit, in aperto (a) po-  
nitur". *Tertull. de anim.*

2. "In simplicitate fides est. — Non per  
difficiles nos Deus ad beatam vitam qua-

(a) "In iis quae aperte in scripturâ posita sunt, in-  
veniuntur illa omnia quae continent fidem moresque vi-  
vendi". *Aug. de doctr. christianâ, l. 2.*

stiones vocat, non multiplici eloquentis facundia: genere sollicitat. In absoluto nobis ac facili est æternitas, (scil.) Jesum suscitatum a mortuis per Deum credere, et ipsum esse Dominum confiteri". *Hilar. de Trinit.* l. 10.—"Dicimus, et palam dicimus [christiani] —Deum colimus per Christum. Per eum, et in eo, se cognosci vult Deus, et coli". *Tertull. apol.* c. 21.

3. "To worship God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and profess that faith in him which worketh by love, is (saith Dr. *Watts* very justly, and in exact agreement with the foregoing declarations) "the substance of Christianity in very few words". *Rational foundation of a chr. church.*

4. "THE true doctrine of the first catholic christian faith, is most plain, clear and comfortable, without any difficulty, scruple, or doubt". *Archbp. Granmer: answer to Gardiner, 1551. P. 395.*

5. "Deus decrevit ad vitam beatam perducere populum suum, non per difficilem & longarum quæstionum salebras, sed per complanatam & compendiarium viam fidei & charitatis. — Ea quæ ad fundamentalem & communem ecclesiarum fidem pertinent, paucis

paucis verbis, et planis ac sanis sunt comprehensa". *Davenant* (episc.) *Joanni Duræo*?

6. "Fundamentum christiana fidei stat nobis unum, idem, integrum, & inconcussum. Nulla inibi particula est, de qua lis moveri, aut solet, aut potest. Superstruuntur huic theoremata quædam scholastico-theologica, de quibus solis atq; depugnamus. Hæc verò quid tandem ad hominem christianum? quid ad salutem?—Doceatur orbis christianus, in hac multiplici credendorum farragine, prudenter distinguere inter genuinos fidei articulos, et parum necessaria scholasticarum conclusionum adjectamenta: Quod haud nimis difficile fuerit". *Jos. Hall* (episc.) eidem *Duræo*.

7. "THE faith of christians did at first consist of few points, those which were professed in baptism, whereof we have divers summaries in the ancients. — There are points of less moment, in which christians without breach of unity may dissent, about which they may dispute, in which they may err, without breach of unity, or prejudice to charity". *Dr. Barrow*, disc. con. *unity of the church*.

8. "IN those propositions which without controversy are universally received in



the whole christian world, so much truth is contained, as being joined with holy obedience, may be sufficient to bring a man to everlasting salvation; and we have no cause to doubt, but that as many as walk according to this rule, — peace shall be upon them, and upon the Israel of God". Archbp. *Usher*, as cited by Mr. *Chillingworth*, in his rel. of prot. chap. iv. sect. 43.

9. "THE one faith into which all christians were baptized, contains only the doctrines of the *Apostles-creed*, which the whole church of Christ for many centuries received as a perfect system of all things necessary to be believed in order to salvation". Dr. *Whitby* on Eph. iv. 5.

10. "As to things to be believed, all the fundamentals of the christian faith are comprehended in the *Apostles-creed*. And he who sincerely professes to believe every thing therein contained, wants nothing, as to matters of belief, in order to his being saved through Jesus Christ, and holding communion with all christian brethren". Bp. *Davenant*, ad pac. eccl. adhort.

11. "THE most useful of all books would be a book intitled, *De paucitate credendorum*;

*dendorum*; that is, of the *small* number of doctrines we are to believe; and there is no article so necessary as this, *viz.* That it is sufficient to believe the apostles-creed".

Bp. *Hall*, treatise on moderation.—He declared also in a sermon before the synod of *Dort* (1618) "That the catechism of the apostles consisted only of *six* articles; whereas (he added) the modern theology is like the *quantity* of mathematicians, which is divisible *in infinitum*". La Roche's abr. of Brandt's hist. vol. 2. p. 412.

12. "It is not fit that a confession which concerns all that will be saved to know and remember, should be any long or tedious discourse. The confession we seek for, should be but *Summa credendorum*". Dr. *Worthington* in his life of Mr. *Mede*. "Let the papists go with their *long faith*; be you contented with the *short faith* of the saints which is revealed unto us in the word of God written.—The holy *scripture* is the only rule of faith". Bp. *Latimer* to Bp. *Ridley*. Confer. 1555.

13. "So long as christian religion was a simple profession of the articles of belief, and a hearty prosecution of the rules of good life, the *fewness* of the articles, and the clear-

ness of the rule, was cause of seldom prevarication [or was a great means of preventing it.] But when divinity is swelled up to so great a body,—it is impossible for any industry to consider so many particulars in the infinite number of questions necessary to be considered, before we can, with certainty, determine any". Bp. Taylor, Liberty of prophesying, sect. 13. And again;

14. "THE first ages of the church, which certainly were the best, did recede the least from the sense of scripture, and the practice of the apostles. They all contented themselves with the *apostles-creed* as the rule of faith". i. 2.

15. It was a very good wish of *Erasmus*, and may very well be our own; — "Uti-  
" nam nostra credulitas *symbolo apostolorum*  
" fuisset contenta. Ubi cœpit esse minus  
" fidei inter christianos, mox increvit sym-  
" bolorum & modus et numerus", (b) *Ratio*  
*veræ theol.* — And he elsewhere says very truly,

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(b) *Erasmus* seems to have here in his thoughts that complaint of *Hilary*, bishop of Poitiers: "Since the Nicene synod, we do nothing but write *creeds*. — What a change is there in the last year's creed? — It is come to that pass at last, that nothing among us,

or





was contented with the single and concise  
symbol of the apostles, or apostolical men.  
*Pref. to Jerom's works, vol. 3.*

16. LET us attend next to the declaration

too many instances, have made it quite another thing from what our Lord and his apostles have exhibited it to our view, in their original plan and description of it, and what they certainly intended should have continued so (being suited for the instruction even of the poor and ignorant) to the end of the world. — But the busy wit of man, not content with that native plainness wherein this divine religion originally appeared, soon intruded, and soon perverted that plainness into a thousand subtleties: Which, being begun by the philosophers, the schoolmen afterwards took up, and carried on, to a thousand more; and the powers of the world at the same time interposing, confirmed them by laws, — too nearly resembling those of the Medes and Persians. — Insomuch that christianity, the pure and genuine religion of its great and wise institutor, continues to this hour, in a state of depression, and (what is much to be lamented, but cannot be remedied) of infamy also and contempt, to those who behold it in this false light, through the thick atmosphere of human inventions. — Hear what an honest heathen historian said of this religion, and of the contentions raised about it, when he is speaking of the emperor *Constantius*; who, by unseasonably intermeddling in theological disputes, helped to pervert it, and make it terminate in mere speculation and sophistry: — “CHRISTIANAM RELIGIONEM absolutam & simplicem anili superstitione confudit: In qua scrutanda perplexius quam componenda gravius, excitavit discidia plurima, quæ progressa fufius aluit concertatione verborum”. *Ammian. Marcellinus, lib. 21.*

tion of Mr. *Wetsten*, which concurs with the foregoing, and gives us a farther information. — “*Dogmata creditu necessaria sunt paucissima, judicio totius ecclesiæ christianæ intra brève apostolorum symbolum contenta; cujus professio in liturgicis unice a baptizando requiritur, et ab ecclesiâ Basiliensi in administratione sacre cœnæ repetitur, hoc addito epiphonemate, His articulis, fratres, sumus contenti, nec quenquam qui hoc credit, temere damnemus*”. Ed. N. T. 1752. tom. 2. p. 874. 875.

17. It is rightly observed by a very able advocate of christianity, “That the christian religion is, in itself, a plain, simple, rational and spiritual religion. Its necessary doctrines are but few, and summed up in the *Apostles-creed*, or even in one much shorter”. Mr. *Browne*: close of defence of religion.

18. THE *Apostles-creed* contains “All the articles of the christian faith.” *Ch. catech.* — “All the necessary articles of the christian faith are comprised in that creed”. *Billingsworth*.

19. “WHATSOEVER is delivered in that *creed*,



creed, we therefore believe, because it is contained in the *scriptures*." Bp. Pearson, in artic. 5.

20. " *Scripture* is the only rule of faith. All things necessary to salvation are plainly delivered in *scripture*". Mr. Chillingworth, par. 1. ch. 4.

21. " WHOSOEVER believes heartily those books of *scripture*, which all the christian churches in the world acknowledge to be canonical, and submits himself indeed to this, as to the rule of his belief, must of necessity believe all things fundamental; and, if he *live* according to his faith, cannot fail of salvation". *Ibid.*

22. " I am fully assured that God does not, and therefore that men ought not, to require any more of any man than this; to believe the *scripture* to be God's word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to *live* according to it". *Ibid.* ch. 6.

23. " LET all men believe the *scripture*, and that only, and endeavour to believe it in the true sense, and require no more of others, and they shall find this not only a better, but the only means to suppress heresy,

heresy, and restore unity". — *Chillingworth's Life by Des-Maizeaux*, p. 174.

24. "ALL protestants agree, that the *scripture* is sufficient to salvation, and contains in it all things necessary to it". Archbp. *Laud*, Conf. with *Fisher*, p. 34.

25. "I believe that all points whatsoever of christian religion are in *scripture* set down as perspicuously, and as clearly intelligible to all capacities, as they are clearly necessary to be believed by all". Lord G. *Digby's* letter to Sir *Ken. Digby*, 1639.

26. "IN the canonical *scriptures*, all that is necessary for our salvation, is abundantly and plainly contained. They are the foundation of the apostles and prophets, upon which the church of God is built: They are the most certain and infallible rule, by which the church may be reduced if she happen to stagger, slip or err; by which all ecclesiastical doctrines ought to be tried: No law, no tradition, no custom is to be received or continued, if it be contrary to *scripture*: No, tho' St. Paul himself, or an angel from heaven should come and teach otherwise". Bp. *Juel*, apol. ch. 2.

27. "A

27. " A christian man (said the first great reformer and father of our protestant church) ought to believe nothing as an article of his faith, except he be assured, that either it is God's commandment, or his word.— " Our Lord Jesus Christ hath given to preachers plain instructions what they ought to teach and do : And if they teach or do any other thing, than is contained in their commission, then it is of no force, nor ought we to regard it". *Catech.* (1548) fol. 245, 247. — " By the word of God, as by the true touchstone, all mens doctrines are to be tried and examined. — As for me, I ground my belief upon God's word, — requiring no man to believe me further than I have God's word for me. — " In all my books I ground my foundation upon God's word". *Answer to Bishop Gardiner*, (1551) p. 445, &c. 449. And lastly, and most fully to the purpose, and with great energy of expression, he thus declares: " The canon of the Bible, is a true, sound, and perfect doctrine, containing all things necessary to salvation : And without the word of God, neither the writings of the fathers, nor general councils, nor the oracles of angels, nor apparitions from the dead, nor customs, can be sufficient in religion to establish doctrine, or maintain new articles



articles of faith". *Unwritten verities*. Vid. *Strype's Cranmer*, b. 2. ch. 5.

Our later prelates continue (and may they ever continue with steady resolution) to assert this great principle of our reformation.

28. "THE holy *scriptures* alone are to be the rule of our faith and practice in religion; so that ever since the reformation, all that stand to the principles of it, challenge this as their birth-right, that they are freed from all human impositions, in faith, or worship, or practice, which are inconsistent with this rule". Bp. *Bradford*, *serm.* bef. the Lord Mayor.

29. "WE have a sure rule given us, by which we may try the doctrines which we are to embrace or reject; namely, not only the light of reason, but that of the holy *scriptures*, written by Moses and the prophets by the evangelists and apostles of our Lord, men endued with a divine spirit on purpose to teach the will of God. We are sent "to the law and to the testimony, and assured, that if any speak not, according to this word, it is because there is no light in them". We are not obliged, nor in the least encouraged, or so much as allowed, to yield an implicit faith to the dictates of any

any man, or of any church in the world",  
Bp. Bradford, serm. on Gal. v. 1. *Stand fast  
in the liberty, &c.*

30. "I look upon the *Scriptures* as the  
only rule of my faith; nor is there any  
other certain foundation on which to build  
it. — Nor ought I to believe any thing  
as an article of faith, which either is not  
contained in them, or cannot plainly be  
proved by them. — The word of God is  
of more authority with me, than the word  
of man. — I chuse rather to regulate my  
faith by what God hath delivered, than  
by what man defines. — Neither the  
church, nor its pastors, ought to teach any  
thing as an article of faith, or require any  
man to assent to it, as such, that cannot  
be shewn to have been either expressly de-  
livered in the word of God, or, by a plain  
and necessary consequence, be proved there-  
by. — If in any thing they require me to  
believe, what is [either] contrary to the  
word of God, or cannot be proved thereby,  
I ought absolutely to reject the one, and  
am under no obligation to receive the other.  
— Let christians believe all they meet with  
in the holy scriptures, and then, to be sure,  
they will believe all that is necessary".  
Archbp. Wake, comment on the ch. catech.  
part II. sect. 5.

31. "I reckon it my bounden duty solemnly to declare, — that the undoubted revelation, contained in the lively oracles of holy *scripture*, is my sole rule of faith and manners; and my reverence for those sacred writings, is bound about my heart." Bp. *Lavinton*, pref. to enthusiasm of methodists and papists compared, vol. 2.

32. ANOTHER learned and worthy prelate, having asserted that the *written word of God* is the only standard to which he would refer the decision of disputed points in religion, declares with a noble emphasis, "I am a *protestant*, and can receive No Other rule of my faith". *Principles and practices of the methodists farther considered*. 1761. [Much like that frank declaration of Dr. *Porter* (writing to Mr. V.) "I am a *christian*, and *rational*; and cannot be convicted but with *Scripture* or *reason*".]

HAVING seen the judgement of so many learned and eminent men upon the foregoing subjects, all concurring in one great and momentous point, let us make this short and obvious reflection:

THE clergy undertake to instruct their people in the christian religion according to the *scriptures*. Here they see briefly



and plainly the substance of what they are to teach, as contained more at large in those lively oracles: whose authority and sufficiency for all matters regarding eternal salvation, they have here confirmed to them by the best writers, both of antiquity, and of modern times.

AFTER this (let it be permitted to ask) Is there any need, any real need, and weighty occasion, that they should be called upon to make any farther and more particular declarations of their faith, and tied down to the sense of a set of propositions drawn up for them by other hands, in the nonage of learning and scripture-knowledge; to which nevertheless they must profess to assent, to which they must always adhere, and from which they must not deviate in their ministerial instructions? tho' it is at the same time confessed, that the composers and imposers of them were but men, frail and fallible like themselves; and that even the church, the aggregate community itself and the best men therein, may err.

WE shall see more to this purpose under the next and following sections, to corroborate the intent of this humble query: To which I shall only subjoin here a remark  
or

or two of the late Dr. *Benson*, being just and pertinent to the point in hand. "It is (saith he) very preposterous that our ancestors, just emerged out of the darkness of popery, who had so little critical skill in the study of the holy scriptures, should dictate to us, in so authoritative a manner, what we shall believe, (c) and how we shall worship God; especially

F 2

since

(c) One would think that our worthy reformers, in the case of prescribing articles to be believed and taught by others, should have reflected a little on their own case, when some years before, they were so sorely galled with the imposition of the famous six articles. The words of the first great projector of our present articles, tho' directed by him to the case of those other, may, I presume, be applied with sufficient propriety, upon the whole, to the case of imposition we have now under view. — "What marvel was it, saith this good prelate, that those [six] articles (notwithstanding divers learned men repugning) passed by the most voices of the Parliament? seeing that although the authority of *Rome* was then newly ceased, yet the darkness and blindness of errors and ignorance that came from *Rome*, still remained, and so overshadowed this realm, that a great number of the parliament had not yet their eyes opened to see the truth". Answer to Gardiner, p. 284, &c.

N. B. *Gardiner* acknowledges "the hardness (as he calls it) of the law that by parliament was established" touching the six articles. And yet this same man, about

four

since the scriptures have been studied with a much more critical exactness, the doctrines of christianity set in a clearer light, and the glorious spirit of candor and liberty has been diffused". *Life of Christ*, ch. 8. — And in a note on 2 *Pet.* iii. ult. he properly asketh this question, "What rea-  
son

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four years after, prescribed a law no less hard to the university of Cambridge, of which he was chancellor; obliging all candidates for degrees to *subscribe* his fifteen articles, and to profess that they believed them all alike to be true; or, without doing this, they should not be admitted to the degrees they sought for. A hard case, but there was no remedy. The consequence was, that 51 submitted, and about 120 refused submission. See the particulars in Dr. *Wilkins's* Concilia, vol. 4. *sub an.* 1555. And see another instance of this bishop's *hardness*, in *Strype's* life of Sir *John Cheke*, where you will find that being fully bent against innovations of every sort, even in the pronunciation (tho' the old and true) of the Greek letters, which began to be restored at Cambridge under his chancellorship, he issued out a decree (in 1542) forbidding, under the penalty of non-admission to degrees, extrusion from fellowships, scholarships, &c. and finally, of expulsion from the university, all and every variation from the old and accustomed manner of sounding and pronouncing those letters, or that language. — This only shews you, how much it is in the power of authority, and old customs, and old opinions, to suppress truth, and prevent its progress, — Q. Are our universities yet free from all such obstacles?





## S E C T. II.

*Of the simplicity and purity of the christian religion as delivered in the scripture, and the prejudice done to it by human inventions.*

1. " **T**HAT faith is best, which hath the greatest *simplicity*". Bp. Taylor, lib. proph. f. 2.

2. " **H**APPY had it been for christians, if the christian religion had been left in the simplicity and purity, in which it is expressed in the scripture". Mr. Bulstrode, letters to Dr. Wood.

3. " **I**t had been an invaluable blessing, if the christian religion had been kept in its first simplicity". Bp. Burnet, introd. to exp. of the articles.

4 " **Q**UAM

4. "QUAM" totæ fuissent res christianæ, quam pacatæ, si ista curiosorum hominum problemata, argutæque minutia, nunquam extitissent; si generalioribus quibusdam exprimenda veritatis formulis contenta doctorum ingenia, sacram theologiam non ita nimium subtiliter cribrassent illicet." Bp. Hall to Mr. Dury.

5. "SURELY the way to heaven that Christ hath taught us, is plain and easy, if we have but honest hearts. We need not many criticisms, many school-distinctions, to come to a right understanding of it." Dr. Cudworth, disc. on 1 Job. ii. 3, 4.

6. "CHRISTIAN religion is not now to be built; but only I desire to have the rubbish and impertinent lumber taken off, — which hides the glorious simplicity of it from them who otherwise would embrace it." Chillingworth: vid. *Life*, p. 176, note EE.

7. "Can we think that we shall prevail with men to put out their eyes, to disbelieve their senses, that they may become christians? — How hath the world been scandalized by things pretended to be matters of faith, which are contradictions to reason, if reason be able to tell any thing that is true."



true. — But there is a harmony between reason and [true] christianity: the latter acknowledges the former, reinforces it, advances and highly improves it, secures the common instincts of good and just, and polishes human nature". Dr. *Whitchcat*, *Serm. 4.* ed. 1698.

8. Bp. *Bedell* "had a true and generous notion of the christian religion; not looking upon it so much as a system of opinions, or a set of forms, as a divine discipline, that reforms the heart and life". His *life*, by Bp. *Burnet*, p. 228.

9. "It was an ingenious saying of general *Wurts*, reported by Mr. de St. *Evremond*, "When men have once taken out of christianity what they have foisted into it, there will be but one religion, as plain in its doctrine, as pure in its morals". *Life of Chillingworth*, p. 181.

10. "Christianity (said a late noble Earl, speaking to Archbishop *Synges*) is a religion every way agreeable to the nature and attributes of God, and conducing to the happiness of man, both here and hereafter, if learned men would let us have it just as Christ and his apostles delivered it". — Abp. *Synges* essay on foolish questions.

Vid.

—Vid. Marq. of *Halifax*, advice to a daughter, p. 16.

11. “*Practical christianity* (says the learned Sir *Charles Wolsely*) is the great end of religion. When men confine religion to speculation, they turn divinity into metaphysics, where they dispute and divide without end. To reduce it to *practice*, is to pursue its proper tendency, and to make it (as indeed it is) the great principle of union and peace”. *Pref. to the life of Mr. J. Machin*. 1671.

12. “RELIGION (as that excellent person Sir *Matth. Hale* very truly observes) is best in its simplicity and purity. — The christian religion was given out with all plainness and perspicuity, with all evidence and certainty; a doctrine and religion containing precepts of all holiness and purity, &c. The main of the christian religion consists in the true belief of the gospel of Christ Jesus, and the practice of those christian virtues that he left to his disciples and followers, both by his example and precept, namely, love of God, holiness and purity of life, humility and lowliness of mind, patience, meekness, gentleness, charity, a low and easy value of the world, contentation of mind, submission to the will  
from will

will of God, dependence upon him, religion to him, and other evangelical virtues, that perfect and rectify the soul. — But yet, together with this christian religion, the professors thereof have in several ages and places chosen to themselves various, adventitious, accidental superstructures, additions, opinions, modes and practices, which they have as it were incorporated into it, and appendicated to it". *Disc. of religion*, ch. II.

13. THE honourable Mr. *Robert Boyle*, one of the greatest ornaments of human nature, and of christianity, "had possessed himself with a most amiable view of that holy religion, separated from either superstitious practices, or the founery of parties. — He always considered it as a system of truths, which ought to purify the hearts, and govern the lives of those who profess it: He loved no practice that seemed to lessen that, nor any nicety that occasioned divisions among christians. He thought pure and disinterested christianity was so bright and so glorious a thing, that he was much troubled at the disputes and divisions which had arisen about some lesser matters, while the great and the most important, as well as the most universally acknowledged truths, were by all sides almost



most as generally neglected, as they were confessed. — His zeal was lively and effectual in the greatest and truest concerns of religion; but he avoided to enter far into the unhappy breaches that have so long weakened, as well as distracted christianity, any otherwise than to have a great aversion to all those opinions and practices, that seemed to him to destroy morality and charity. Bp. Burnet, ser. at his funeral.

14. THE sedate and wise archbishop Tillotson, who had deeply studied human nature and the christian religion, "judged that the great design of this religion, was to reform mens natures, to govern their actions, to restrain their appetites and passions, to sweeten their tempers, compose their affections, and raise their minds above the interests and follies of this present world, to the hope and pursuit of endless felicity: and he considered the whole christian doctrine as a system of principles all tending to this end. He looked on our contending about lesser matters, or about subtleties relating to those that are greater, as one of the chief practices of the powers of darkness to defeat the true ends for which the Son of God came into the world." Bp. Burnet, ser. at his funeral.

15. "CHRISTIANITY is not only a system of doctrines (and those reducible within little compass) but of precepts also, designed to regulate mens practice, and reform their lives. — Let this be taken for christianity, and avowed to be so, and seriously endeavoured to be propagated as such, and it will appear in its genuine lustre. — Let whatsoever comes not within this compass, or is not truly and primitively christian, be cut off from it, and it will then appear an entire self-evident thing, and the christian church to be but one".  
Mr. *Howe*, on relig. contention : pref.

16. To which, as confirming the observation, I will subjoin that of Bp. *Hall*, viz.

"NEVER treatise could be more necessary in this curious and quarrelous age, than *De paucitate credendorum*. The infinite subdivisions of those points, which we advance to the honour of being the objects of our belief, confound our thoughts, and marr our peace". *Via media*.

17. I shall conclude this section with the words of a very sensible writer, which will properly sum up and inforce the whole. — "The doctrines of christianity are so few,

few, and so plainly delivered, that they are at this day acknowledged by all the several sorts of christians that make a number, or are fit to be considered under a name in the world. For how many are there, who do not profess the apostles creed? which was the old rule and measure of christian faith. — If men would be persuaded to preserve these ancient boundaries of christianity inviolate, and suffer the primitive simplicity to be restored; the great occasion of contention would be cut off. — *Aquinas* and *Bellarmino*, and the *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, would not be studied so much, but the *sermon on the mount* a great deal more: and upon casting up the account it would be found, that what we lost in subtlety thereby, we should gain in religion. Disc. of the rise and power of parliaments, 1677. pref.

## SECT.



## S E C T. III.

*Remarks on controversies about religion.*

I. **C**ONTROVERSIES well managed, with the spirit of candor, ingenuity and moderation, and with a sincere love of truth, and desire to advance it in the world, are of excellent use in many respects, which need not be pointed out to the judicious and intelligent. — On the other hand, controversies improperly or imprudently managed, have in all ages done much dishonour, as well as disservice to the christian religion. They broke out early among the professors of it, and did infinite mischief to the church of Christ, destroying the purity of the faith, corrupting the morals of men, and at last involving the contenders in one common destruction. —

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The learned dean *Brideaux* gives you this account of the matter :

2. "THE churches of the east, once the most flourishing, having drawn the abstrusest niceties into controversy, which were of little or no moment to that which is the chief end of our holy christian religion, and divided and subdivided about them into endless schisms and contentions, did thereby so destroy that peace, love and charity from among them, which the gospel was given to promote, and instead thereof continually provoked each other to that malice, rancour, and every evil work, that they lost the whole substance of their religion, while they thus eagerly contended for their own imaginations concerning it, and in a manner drove christianity quite out of the world by those very controversies in which they disputed with each other about it. So that at length having wearied the patience and long-suffering of God, in thus turning his holy religion into a firebrand of hell, for contention, strife and violence among them, which was given them out of his infinite mercy to the quite contrary end, for the salvation of their souls, by living holily, righteously and justly in this present world, he raised up the Saracens to be the instruments

ments of his wrath, to punish them for it. *Pref. to the life of Mahomet.*—Many lamentable particulars relating to these and the like disorders of the christian church in those times may be seen in *Eusebius*, and other ancient historians. The contentions about hard words and metaphysical terms, quite unknown to the sacred writers, and understood by neither of the contending parties, were grown so great, that, as *Mr. Marvell* speaks, in his facetious manner, “the disputants on both sides picked those words and terms to the very bones; and those bones too (he continues) were afterwards broken, in order to come at the very marrow of divinity”. Sad work made with the plainest and most practical religion in the world. Such the effects of metamorphosing christianity into heathen philosophy, or worse scholastic divinity!

As to some of the principal causes of controversies agitated between fellow-christians in these modern times, many wise and good men have long seen them, complained of them, and wished them removed; tho’ hitherto (great is the pity) without effect. — Hear a learned and good prelate.

13. “WERE christianity left in that latitude and simplicity wherein it was delivered



livered by our Lord and his apostles (and it is hard to assign sufficient reasons why it should not be so left) our controversies would be reduced to a very small compass, if not totally cease. — Nothing certainly has begot more dissensions, than urging too strict an union [in certain points of belief or opinion, and in the externals of religion.] — Those unlucky wits the *school-doctors* have introduced much evil into the church, which affects the very vitals of our christianity, and is likely to stick not only closer, but longer to the church, than any other darts that have wounded it". Bp. *Wetstenhals* earnest and compassionate suit for forbearance, &c. 1691.

4. "THERE are a multitude of questions that have been brought into books of divinity, and sometimes also into the pulpit, which at best serve only to gratify a curious itch of disputation, and are no way serviceable towards the confirming of our faith, or directing of our practice in order to our eternal happiness; and therefore, with respect to religion, most justly stand chargeable with folly, whatever wit or learning may otherwise appear to be in them. —

"Learned men have brought into divinity, as well as philosophy, a great number of hard words, terms of art, and subtle distinctions.

stinctions. By the dextrous use and application of which, it is often easy for an ingenious man to give an air of obscurity to that which is plain, of truth to that which is false, and of falsehood to that which is true". Archbp. *Syngé*: essay on foolish questions.

5. So little is true christianity concerned in the common disputes about matters of opinion and speculative niceties, that it has a quite different view and intention, and those litigations do naturally draw away mens thoughts from superior objects. How very trifling do these little differences in opinion appear in the eyes of almighty God! and will his final approbation or rejection of men depend upon these? — That ingenious and candid observation of Lord *Verulam*, must be pleasing to every benevolent and humane heart. "A man of judgement and understanding, said that oracle of wisdom, shall sometimes hear ignorant men differ [about matters of opinion] and shall know well within himself, that those who so differ, do mean *one* [and the same] *thing*; and yet they themselves would never agree. And now if it so comes to pass in that distance of judgement which is between man and man; shall we not think that God above, who knows

knows the heart, doth not discern, that frail men, in some of their contradictions, *intend the same thing*; and accepteth of both? *1<sup>st</sup> Essay* 3.

6. Mr. *Pope*, in one of his letters to Bp. *Atterbury*, says "he verily believes that all honest and reasonable christians would be of the same religion, if they were thorowly understood by one another, if they did but talk enough together every day, and had nothing to do together but to serve God, and live in peace with their neighbour". And it is undoubtedly true, that many differences about religion might be happily made up, if men would converse together candidly upon the points in dispute, and pay equal attention to the reasons offered on the other side, as to those urged on their own (d).—HOWEVER, when all these petty differences on earth are over, how agreeable will be the surprize of the several dissentients at their meeting together in that happy state, where all dissensions are at an end, and all disputes about opinions for ever banished! — Dr.

(d) The sedate and judicious Mr. *Howe* was plainly of this mind, and has fine thoughts upon the subject. See his *life*, p. 206, 207.



Trapp, in his poem on heaven, expresses this sentiment in an affecting manner.

" Those who on earth, in zealous warm dispute,  
Contending strove each other to confute,  
May greet above, clasp'd in embraces dear,  
And wonder how they meet each other there."

7. EXPERIENCE shews us, and might convince us, that disputes seldom gain their ends, and perhaps never can, being either in their nature not the proper means, or in the management not properly conducted, to attain them. " Disputing (said a man of much observation) is as incompetent a way to resettle the truth of religion, as the sword is to propagate it. Every man naturally hates to be accounted a fool, or a liar: And therefore, when worsted by the force of arguments (which may be to him unanswerable, tho' not convincing) he falls into heat and passion, which the other returning with equal warmth, at length both lose the question, and fall from words to blows,—and farther make parties and factions, &c. And after all, the contention most commonly is only about *words*. — This *England* has to its cost experimented, and, 'tis to be feared, if not timely prevented, will agen". *Disc. of the rise and power of parliaments* (before cited) p. 90, &c.

8. "It

8. "It is visible to any man who will but attentively observe the courses of men professing the christian religion [under what ever denomination, or within whatever sect] that the greatest fervour and animosity of the professors of this religion, is not so much about the substantials of it, either in things to be believed or practised, as touching those additions and superstructions [that have been tacked to it, and laid upon it;] some contending as fervently for them, as if the life of christianity consisted in them; some as bitterly and severely contesting against them, as if the life and soul and substance of christian religion were not possibly consistent with them. — Now the whole tenor of the doctrine of christianity, as it was delivered by Christ and his apostles, decries nothing more than anger, wrath, malice, railing, evil-speaking, back-biting, slanders, reproaches, names and epithets, or scorns, craft and subtlety: yet all these black legions are called, used, and imployed in the management of that cause, which each party pretends to be the cause of Christ". *Sir Matth. Hale; disc. of rel. chap. 3.*

9. "Tis strange to astonishment, that those who agree in the substantial and great points of the reformed religion, and are of

different sentiments only in things not so clear, nor of that moment, compared with those wherein they consent, should still be opposite parties. — Integrity with charity would remove those things that have so long disunited us". Dr. *Bates*, in his account of Mr. *Baxter's* life, 1692.

10. "WE know that generally, by how much any thing is more disputable, the less it is necessary, or conducive to the christian life. God hath graciously provided, that what we are to live by, should not cost us so dear. — Commonly, where the humour of disputing prevails, men divert from those plainer things with some slighter and more superficial reverence to them, but more heartily esteeming them insipid and jejune, because they have less in them to gratify their appetite, and [thereupon they] betake themselves to such things about which they may more plausibly contend".

THESE are the observations, and very just ones, of the judicious Mr. *Howe*. The following also are as beautiful as they are apposite and affecting.

11. "WHEN contention (says he) becomes a man's element, and he cannot live out



out of that fire; strains his wit, and racks his invention to find matter for quarrel; is resolved that nothing said or done by others shall please him, only because he means to please himself in disputing; disputes only that he may dispute, and loves dissention for itself; this is the unnatural humour that hath so unspeakably troubled the church, and debased religion, and filled mens souls with wind and vanity; yea, with fire and fury. This hath made christians gladiators, and the christian world a clamorous theatre, while men have equally affected to contend, and to make ostentation of their ability to do so, &c. *Life of Mr. Howe by Dr. Calamy*, p. 48, 49, 50.

12. WOFUL were those days of logomachy and froth, which the *Oxford-antiquary* speaks of, in his life of Mr. *Chillingworth*, "when wrangling, as it was called, was, he says, a common fashion among the scholars of *Oxford*, especially, as he adds, among the disputing theologists, or those that set themselves apart (unhappy the observation) purposely for divinity"—for divinity, the best and noblest of sciences, all calculated for humility, peace, and piety, but then converted into wrangling, idle sophistry, and the pride of contention. — Are there not still, in places of learned education, a

set of novices dignified with the appellation of sophisters and wranglers? trained up to this art from the infancy of their studies, and so habituated to it, and riveted in it, as to retain (many of them) an unhappy turn and humour for disputing, all their days. Which bad effects are too frequently observed in riper years, when judgement and experience might and should have corrected those petulant follies.

13. AND what wonder is it then to see, as we often do in disputes between learned men, that many of them are so tenacious of what they have once asserted in support of their favourite opinions, as never to give up their assertion, how clearly soever refuted and demolished. A mean spirit this, unbecoming men of reason, and below the dignity of christian divines. — The famous *Dr. Twisse* was one of this turn. *Dean Pierce* has him in his eye, when he thus writes. “ Some men will rather chuse, not only to assert the strangest paradoxies, and admit the hardest consequences issuing from them, but will also professedly endeavour to maintain both, and plead hard for them in their answers and replications, than recede in the least from those opinions which in their public writings they had undertaken to

to defend" (c). *Letter to Mr. Walton, sub-joined to his life of Bishop Sanderson, 8vo.*

Thus you see how difficult it is, if not impossible, for some men to be ingenuous, and to own truth. They will answer and answer, with replications and triplications,

(c) We have a remarkable instance of this in the learned Dr. *Holcot*, of whom Bp. *Juel* spake in his sermon at Paul's Cross, 1560. — "Holcot, to uphold the error that he had once taken in hand to defend, was driven to confesse, that a man may meede [merit] at Goddes hande by an erroneous and false sayth, yea althoughe he worship the deuell". — Others when engaged in controversy, are resolved, whatever it costs them, to have the last word, and give the last blow. Dr. *Fuller* properly rallies such fighters, and might as properly have styled them heretics; for in reality they are, tho' not commonly accounted, so. "Bold men, saith he, tho' inwardly convinced with force of reason, count not themselves conquered till they confesse it; so that in effect, none can be overcome except they will themselves. For some are so shameless, that they count not their cause *wrackt*, as long as any thing alive comes to land, so long as they have breath to talk, tho' not to answer, and employ their hands [and pens] not to untie their adversaries arguments, but only obstinately to lay hold on their own opinions; yea, after the conference ended, they cry *victoria* in all companies where they come, whilst their auditors, generally as engaged as the disputants, will succour their champion with partial relations". — This was generally, if not always the manner of pursuing controversies in the days of *Fuller*. And is the matter much mended since? *Holy State*, b. 4. c. 10.

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tho' in all they say, there is a concealed falsehood. After all, this is certain; — "That when any one maintains an error, the more he answers, the more he errs".

14. LL language and scurrility is also too common with disputants. — *Rigaltius* in his life of *Putean* gives this account of him, which may well make controversial writers, addicted to abuse and virulence, ashamed. — "*Odit rixas & jurgia, præsertim inter eruditos; ac turpe esse dicebat viros indubitate doctos caninâ rabie famam vicissim suam rodere ac lacerare scriptis trucibus, tanquam vilissimos de plebe, cerdones in angipertis sese luto ac stercore conspurcantes*". — This heat of contention, this canine rage, this snarling and biting, was not unknown, I find, even in the ancient church. *Tertullian* has them in his eye, when he somewhere archly says, *Habet & Ecclesia dies caniculares*. What! are we never to have an end of these ecclesiastical dog-days? They seem to have their periodical returns like the other; but their duration is much longer, as their heat is generally more intense. — We have heard of books of *polemical divinity*, and *controversial theology*. But I know nothing in *christianity* that is polemical or controversial. The wisdom which is from above, teacheth us better lessons, and inspires us with nobler principles.

15. THE censure, tho' severe, passed by bishop *Burnet* upon such indiscreet practices, is a very just one. — "There is scarce (saith he) a more unaccountable thing to be imagined, than to see a company of men professing that religion, a great and main precept whereof is mutual love, forbearance, gentleness of spirit, and compassion to all sorts of persons, and agreeing in all the essential parts of that doctrine, differing only in some less material and more disputable things, yet maintain those differences with a zeal so disproportioned to the value of them, persecuting all that disagree from them with — violence; or if they want means to use outward force, (f) with all bitterness of spirit". — Pref. to Mr. *Scaugal's* life of God in the soul of man.

(f) It has been shrewdly suspected, that those who are of this temper, virulent in disputing, and haughty in dictating to others, would sometimes go a step farther, if they well durst. — To this purpose Mr. *Howe* remarks, "It is too manifest, that the same confident insulting genius [or humor] which makes a man think himself competent to be a standard to mankind, would also make him impatient of dissent, and tempt him to do worse than reproach one that differs from him, if it were in his power. And the club or sagot-arguments, must be expected to take place, where what he thinks rational ones did not do the business". *Life*, p. 206, 207.

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16. It is a severe reflection which I have somewhere met with, tho' a proper admonition to the persons concerned, "that the principal, nay almost the only thing to be learned from theological disputes and polemic divinity is, that divines, tho' they profess themselves advocates for a religion which recommends and enforces meekness, moderation, mutual forbearance, candor, and humility, in the strongest manner, have been remarkable for pride, rancour, malignity, and fiery zeal". — A conduct which (I am sorry to say it, but it is too evident to be denied) has brought a disgrace upon many of the sacred order. And even the order itself has, tho' very unjustly, been disparaged on this and the like accounts. And not only so, but, what is still worse if possible, the cause of religion and truth hath too often suffered by such a conduct. A learned lay-gentleman observed it with concern long ago. "Atheism and irreligion (he saw and said) gathered strength, while the truth was weakened by an unworthy way of contending for it. And I am persuaded (he said farther) that most men, while their thoughts are so busied in *chicanes* of controverted points, grow negligent of those more weighty ones that more nearly import salvation, and so run out of the most essential good of their souls, as imper-



pertinently as many a peevish *freeholder* that wastes a solid estate in endless law-suits for a trifle". Lord *Digby's* letters, 1639.

17. How different the disposition, behaviour and sentiments of the excellent bishop *Bedell*! who thus calmly and discreetly reflects upon the conduct of his brethren. — "For my part, saith he, I have been long of this mind, that many [divines] in their sermons and writings are to blame for their manner of dealing with the adversaries of their opinions, when they give reins to their tongues and pens, to railing and reproachful speeches, and think they have done well, when they exceed or equal them in this trade; wherein to have the better, is indeed to be the worse. — And this is yet more to be blamed, because sometimes all reasons are laid by, and nothing is soundly refuted, but only hot words are given, yea, and with a misconceiving, or misinterpreting at least, of their opinions, and making [a thing] worse than it is. — And yet, many times it shall be found, upon fair and equitable inquiry, that the men or their opinions are not so bad, as we make them to be, or would have them seem to be". *Life of this bishop*, p. 149, &c.

18. It is a just observation, "A good cause

cause doth not want any bitterness to support it, as a bad one cannot subsist without it. A contentious disputant seems rather to be in a passion because he cannot find out what to say for his own opinion, than because he has discovered any pernicious absurdities in that of his antagonist".

19. THE advice given by the celebrated master of the Charter-house (who had sufficiently seen the mean arts of controvertists would be an excellent rule, if followed, to promote truth and peace in debating about opinions. — "*Sufficiat unicuique suam proponere sententiam, optimis quibus poterit rationibus & argumentis munitam, sine damno alterius, absque contumeliis & rixis, quæ nihil faciunt ad veritatem, aut ad suæ causæ probationem. Quinimo, laborantis causæ indicium est, cum ipsius patroni ad convicia confugiunt*", &c. De stat. mort. & ref. p. 314.

20. EVERY friend to truth, and latitude of sentiment, must be pleased with this declaration of a candid writer, addressing an author from whom he differed in opinion: — "I sincerely wish that our present difference of opinion, may end in an union of sentiments, to the advancement of truth, and not tend, like most modern

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controversy, only to confound it. For my part, I shall always think there is more glory in *confessing* truth and conviction, than in playing the *academic* with the greatest success, or labouring by controversial arts to support a falling hypothesis". *Letter to the author of an inquiry into the nature of the human soul.* 1741.

21. "WHEN the present disputes about religion are ceased, and after-ages come to consider the differences in cool blood, and freedom from those secular things that accompanied them in the times when they were on foot, — they will wonder what it was, that should put them into such heats, about such trifles. The reason plainly is, that worldly-designing men, knowing that nothing animates mens zeal so much, as what relates to religion, carry on their designs under notions of it". Mr. *James Bonnel*: *Life*, p. 228.

22. "THERE is no hostility (as the *sieur Montaigne* remarks) accounted so excellent, as that which is cloked with the pretence of the christian religion. Our zeal performs wonders, when it seconds our inclinations to hatred. — The disputes which are managed with heat and passion, ought to be forbidden (I suppose he means,  
by



by law) as well as the other crimes of the tongue, [and he might have added, of the pen.] We first quarrel with mens reason, and then with the persons. We only learn to dispute, that we may contradict; and while every one contradicts another, and is contradicted by him again, it often falls out, that all the fruit of the dispute is, to lose and destroy the truth". *Miscel.*

23. It is an amiable character given of the great *Erasmus*, — "*In respondendo semper civilis erat, idque habebat sibi propositum, omnino stylam incruentum servare. — Candidus alienæ doctrinæ æstimator. — Ita pertroucinantes veritati* (says he) *ut in neminem finis contumeliosus — non uti quenkum insectemur; qui morbus ab opere christiano, imò à totâ vitâ christianâ, quam longissime debet abesse*". And with regard to his own conduct and disposition in respect of disputable matters, and free acknowledgement of the truth when convinced of it, he thus speaks: "*Nos ad utrumque juxta parati sumus; ut vel rationem reddamus, si quid rectè monuimus, vel ingenuè confiteamur errorem, sicubi deprehendimur*". A declaration becoming a gentleman, a scholar, and a christian; and also becoming all that profess themselves to be in search of truth. His life written by the very learned and ingenious  
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Dr. *Fortin*, has a tendency to instil into us this most amiable spirit and temper.

24. THE great ingenuity and love of truth which was so engaging in the temper and character of Erasmus, was also very conspicuous in his famous contemporary and benefactor, archbishop *Cranmer*; and we observe at the same time with pleasure his ardent gratitude to God for rescuing him from the vassalage of popery. How affecting are his words on this occasion, full of honest simplicity and piety! "I am glad even from the bottom of my heart, that it hath pleased almighty God in this latter end of my years, to give me knowledge of my former error, and a will to embrace the truth, setting apart all manner of worldly respects, which be special hindrances that hold back many from the free profession of Christ and his word. — "And because I am desirous that all my countrymen of England (unto whom I have no small care and charge to tell the truth) should no longer be kept from the same truth, therefore have I published the truth which I know, in the English tongue, to the intent that I may edify all by that tongue, which all do perfectly know and understand. — "I know in what office God hath placed me, and to what purpose,

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that is to say, to set forth his word truly unto his people, to the uttermost of my power, without respect of person, or regard of any thing in the world, but of him alone". *Answ. to Bp. Gard.* p. 71, 265, 7.

— This great honesty and love of truth made him hate and despise *wrangling* about questions in debate, which nevertheless is so common even to this day among disputants who have not his temper and ingenuity. He considers such men as a set of low creatures, void of true generosity of mind, addicted to worldly interest, seeking that more than truth, and faring in their success accordingly. "Such, saith he (having an eye to *Gardiner*, &c.) is the success of them that study to *wrangle* in words, without any respect of opening the *truth*". *Ibid.* p. 7.

25. We go on to another excellent pattern of mildness and humility, deserving the notice and imitation of controvertists, especially divines, whose very office reminds them to be gentle unto all men, to seek peace, and to speak the truth in love.

ADMIRABLE was the forbearance and command of temper in the management of controversy, exercised by the famous Mr. *Hooker*, author of the ecclesiastical polity.



polity. — “ A sharper reproof than the following (saith his biographer) did never fall from the pen of this humble man, viz. *Your next argument consists of railing, and of reasons. To your railing I say nothing; to your reasons I say what follows*”. And what a fine declaration is this, of that good man, alluding to the virulence of his pragmatical opponents: viz. “ The time will come, when three words uttered with charity and meekness, shall receive a far more blessed reward, than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit”. *Epist. prefixed to eccl. pol.*

26. THERE are, have been, and, we may hope, always will be, under all denominations, and in all communions of the christian church, many excellent men, real ornaments to, as well as sincere professors of Christ's religion. — Mr. John Machin, a pious minister of the last century, was one of this happy number and character. The learned Sir Charles Wolfely, who was well acquainted with him, tells us, that he was one who lived not within the impalement of any party, but bore a diffusive charity and benevolence to all good men, of whatever denomination. He was a man, says he, of a catholic spirit,

who made religion his business, and travelled with the salvation of mankind. —

“ His moderation, says another person who knew him, and wrote his life, was remarkable to all sorts of godly people, tho’ of differing judgements; his heart and heat being wholly taken up with the great and necessary parts of religion, that all true christians agreed in; and, making the substance of religion his work and business, he never had leisure to trouble himself with *controverted* circumstances, nor would put his soul out of tune with such things as had caused so much jarring and disharmony among christians. He was never (or very seldom, and then not out of choice) heard to discourse of the dividing *controversies* of the times”. *Life*, 1671.

27. MR. *John Shower* (brother to Sir Bartholomew) was a gentleman of the like amiable and happy temper in regard to controversies between fellow-protestants. “ He was a peaceable minister, that never affected to differ with any, or engage himself in disputes about matters in difference. — He did not think the subjects of disputes about nonconformity to be of equal importance with the great essential truths of the christian religion, nor with those which distinguish protestants from papists”, &c.

*Life*

*Life by Mr. Tong* (1716) p. 77, 16. See also a like account of the peaceable disposition and conduct in this respect, of the eminently pious and charitable Mr. *Philip Henry*, in his life, p. 183, 214, 220, 221, &c. "He was zealous above all things to promote *substantial goodness* and *true christianity*, being truly *peaceable* in all his expressions and actions. And he took pleasure in observing, that notwithstanding the many sad divisions and *disputes* that are in the christian church, yet all *true christians* are *one*; and tho' in some things they *differ* in *opinion*, yet those things wherein they are *agreed*, are many *more*, and much *more considerable*, than those wherein they *differ*".

28. THE late excellent bishop *Fleetwood* was also a man of a most happy temper and discreet behaviour in this respect. — "He was much concerned to see so much passion and uncharitableness raised by difference in opinion in matters of religion; and thought that mere mistakes, and such differences as did not influence practice, were to be borne with. — And in particular with regard to debates about opinions, it was almost a principle with him, never to enter into *contraversy*, to which he had an extreme aversion; the acrimony with which



such disputes were too often carried on, being not at all agreeable to the calmness and meekness of his temper: for which reason he would not be drawn to defend what he had written, "I write my own sense as well as I can", was his saying upon such occasions. "If it be right, it will support itself: If it be not, it is fit it should sink". — *Account of his life, prefixed to his works.*

29. HAPPY will be the day when these wretched controversies will be no more in fashion, delighted in, or practised, but rather become odious and contemptible, as they probably will in time, to all wise and good men. Mean while, all serious christians may and do, and will heartily join with the valuable Dr. *Jortin*, when he expresses his favourable sentiments of more peaceable and better times to come, for promoting the christian interest. Thus mildly and sensibly doth he speak upon the subject. — "It is to be hoped that a time will come, when religion will have a fairer and more alluring aspect, when christians will be united, not in opinion as to all theological points, for that is impossible whilst men are men, but that they will be united in benevolence and charity, in intercommunion, and in one common  
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and simple profession of faith; that their manners will be suitable to their profession, and that they will be more peaceable, more virtuous, and more pious; and then the external impediments to the conversion of unbelievers, will in no small measure be removed". *Remarks on eccl. hist.* vol. 3. P. 445, 446.

30. To which we may properly subjoin the words of bishop *Bradford*, pointing to the same desirable period, and happier turn of affairs, when he says, "And thus it will be with christians, when it shall please God again to pour out on his catholic church the spirit of primitive christianity; when he shall have rooted out of it all idolatry, superstition and tyranny, together with that secular, worldly spirit that hath greatly prevailed among christians; when, finally, he shall incline the hearts both of the governors and of the private members of the christian body throughout the world, to reduce the christian faith and worship to its primitive simplicity and integrity, and to lay the stress of religion more upon practice than upon profession. This is, in the mean time, what every sincere and good christian should aim at". *Discourse intitled, Unanimity and charity the characters of christians.*

31. WHAT may be proper to be done, the mean while, by friends to truth and peace, towards the recovery of both, and putting an end to controversies so destructive of both, is plainly and rightly pointed out by another worthy bishop, who had a right understanding of the christian religion, and studied the peace of the christian church. — "There cannot be a more effectual course taken to put an end to the *controversies* with which we are at this day disturbed, and to the pernicious effects of all [*controversies*] whatsoever, than the right explaining and well improving of the subject of the great *design* of christianity. For this is to strike at the grand *cause* of them, they being to be imputed to nothing so much, as to the ignorance of, and non-attendance to, that *design*". Bp. *Fowler*: pref. to *design of christianity*.

32. I cannot, I think, better close up these observations, than by exhibiting, and also recommending to the most serious consideration of christians, the following most charitable and affecting prayer for the peaceable state of the christian church, drawn up by the pious and learned Dr. *Hammond*: [Of whom, by the way, bishop *Fell* gives this valuable character; that he  
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was never angry with those who pertinaciously dissented from him, for not being of his mind in points of speculation; nor in the least with his scornful opposites, &c. *Life*, p. 186.]

—“**L O R D**, let no unseasonable stiffness of those that are in the right, no perverse obstinacy of those that are in the wrong, hinder the closing of our wounds; but let the one instruct in meekness, and be thou pleased to give to the other repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth. To this end, do thou, **O Lord**, mollify all exasperated minds; take off all animosities and prejudices, contempt, and heart-burnings; and by uniting their hearts, prepare for the reconciling their opinions. And, [that nothing may intercept the clear sight of thy truth, **Lord**, let all private and secular designs be totally laid aside; that gain may no longer be the measure of our godliness, but that the one great and common concernment of truth and peace, may be unanimously and vigorously pursued. And do thou so guide and prosper all pacific endeavours, that those happy primitive days may at length revert, wherein **VICE WAS THE ONLY HERESY**.”

## S E C T. IV.

*Of church communion, upon large and liberal principles.*

1. "THE bonds of christian union are set down (Eph. iv.) One faith, one baptism, &c. and not one rite, one opinion. — It is a thing of great moment and use, well to define, what, and of what latitude, those points are, which disincorporate men from the body of the church, and cast them out, and quite cashier them from the communion and fellowship of the faithful. Now if any one think this hath been done long ago, let him well consider, with what sincerity and moderation. — Peace is not the thing that most people love, but party". — Lord Bacon, de augm. scient. l. 9. c. 1.

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2. THE following are very candid sentiments of the learned *Curcellæus*, and well deserving the regard of all christian churches, and of all friends to christian unity and truth. "*Nemo urgeri debet ad consentiendum eo quod non est infallibilis veritatis. — Itaque nihil absurdi foret, si omnes illi qui ex solâ scripturâ pendere se velle in rebus fidei profiterentur, in unum ecclesiæ corpus jungerentur, & se mutuâ tolerarent (g) in cæte-*

(g) Every son of peace, and friend to mutual forbearance, civility and truth, speaks to the same purpose. Thus particularly the learned and pacific *Acontius*. "*Frustra speraverit aliquis fore unquam, ut cum Dei ecclesiâ tam bene agatur, ut de rebus omnibus omnes idem sentiant; quare una illa reliqua est concordia ratio, si qui necessaria amplectuntur ferant se mutuâ, & suas controversias inter se amanter humaniterque, uti fratres, tractent*". *Strat. Sat. l. 7. p. 367.* — And another well observes, "*Those that will promote the peace of the church, must require assent and profession only to some few necessary things; and in vain do men hope or expect, that the whole church of God should be of the same mind in many or all things*". Q. If this is not to be expected, why should it be required? and may not christian communion be maintained without it? Bp. *Taylor*, I am sure, thought there might be a brotherly and peaceable communion kept up among christians, without requiring any formal professions or subscriptions to any set of tenets, as tests of opinions, in order to such communion. Such tests would rather divide than unite them. *Vid. Duct. dubit. l. 3. & alib.* And several valuable observations to the same purpose in *Brandt's* dedication of his history,

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*ris, ubi diversa sentiunt, donec Deus ignorantibus veritatem suam patefecerit.* Instit. rel. chr. l. 1. c. 15. f. 6.

3. "THERE is no readier way to a good accord [between christian churches] than that there be a consent in the necessary articles [or grand fundamentals] which are but few, and almost agreed upon already among all christians; and that in others, place be given to christian liberty. If this distinction were well applied, and divine laws fairly severed from ecclesiastical constitutions, godly and moderate men could not long be at variance in things absolutely necessary". *Is. Casaubon* to *Card. Perron*. — *Lord Bacon* speaks to much the same purpose in one of his essays, viz. concerning *unity in religion*.

4. BUT still more clearly, and more closely to the point, speaks the incomparable *Chillingworth*. — "Let all men believe the *scripture*, and that only, and endeavour to believe them [the scriptures] in the true sense, and require no more of *others*; and they shall find this not only a better, but the *only* means to restore *unity*. — And if no more than this were required of any man, to make him capable of *church-communion*, then all men so qualified, tho' they were diffe-

different in opinion, yet, notwithstanding any such difference, must be of necessity one in communion". *Life*, p. 174.

5. AGAIN: "This is most certain, that to reduce christians to unity of communion, there are but two ways that may be conceived probable; the one, by taking away diversity of opinions touching matters of religion; the other by shewing that the diversity of opinions, which is among the several sects of christians, ought to be no hindrance to their unity in communion. Now the former of these is not to be hoped for without a miracle.—What then remains, but that the other way must be taken, and christians must be taught to set a higher value upon those high points of faith and obedience wherein they agree, than upon those matters of less moment wherein they differ, and understand that agreement in those, ought to be more effectual to join them in one communion, than their difference in other things of less moment, to divide them". *Rel. of prot.* ch. 4. sect. 43.

6. BISHOP Taylor, the justly admired author of that valuable treatise, *Liberty of prophesying*, delivers his sentiments on this head, in the same candid and generous manner,

manner, and much to the same effect upon the whole, that Mr. *Chillingworth* does. — “ In the midst of the distractions and divisions [that prevail in the christian world] we have no other help [in reference to church-communion] but all of us to be united in that common term [of connection] which as it does constitute the church in its being such, so is it the medium of the communion of saints; and that is, the creed of the apostles: and, in all other things, an honest endeavour to find out what truths we can, and a charitable and mutual permission to others, that disagree from us, and our opinions. I am sure this may satisfy us, for it will secure us; but I know not of any thing else that will”. *Ep. dedic. &c. Vid. sect. 22.* (See also Mr. *Hales’s* tract of schism.) — He farther asketh the following questions, which have not yet been answered: “ Can any man say and justify, that the apostles did deny communion to any man that believed the apostles creed (or the summary of that faith which they preached) and lived a good life? — If this was sufficient to bring men to heaven then, why not now? If the apostles admitted all to their communion that believed this creed [i. e. the substance of revealed religion] why shall we exclude any that preserve the same intire? Why is not  
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our faith of these articles of as much efficacy for bringing us to heaven, as it was in the churches apostolical?" *Seet. 2. and 11.*

7. THE pious and peaceable Dr. Bates "was for the intire union of all visible christians (meaning by christianity, what is essential thereto, whether doctrinal or practical; and by visibility, the probable appearance thereof) and *was* for free communion of all such, of whatsoever persuasion in extra-essential matters, if they pleased. And this design he vigorously pursued as long as there was any hope, desisting when it appeared hopeless, and resolving to wait till God should give a spirit suitable hereto". (See in Mr. *Howe's* Life by Dr. *Calamy*, p. 239.)

8. Mr. *Howe* also, a person of great sense and exemplary moderation, "was for the union and communion of all visible christians; and for making nothing necessary to christian communion, but what Christ hath made necessary, or what is indeed necessary to one's being a *christian*. — He was for having nothing remain as a test or boundary of christian communion, but what has its foundation as such, in plain reason, or express revelation. — Christianity,

anity, he observed, is not that which is appropriate to this or that party, but whatsoever of sincere religion shall be found common to them all". — *Ibid.* p. 36, 238, 239, 124.

9. THIS was likewise, in the main, the judgement of the late learned Archbp. Wake upon the subject. "Where, said he, mens differences are in points that do not at all affect their religious service, or not so much but that God may very well be worshiped, and yet *communion* with our fellow-christians preserved too, in such cases as this, our dissentions ought not only not to lessen our charity, but not to break our unity neither". *Serm. at Hampton-court, 1689.*

THIS may seem to be a proper place to throw in a few remarks concerning that unlucky topic, *occasional communion*, which at a certain period within memory created so much disturbance in this kingdom, and instead of uniting fellow-protestants divided them into parties, to serve a political interest. Being averse to disputes upon the subject, I chuse to exhibit *facts* only, as I find them related by that sensible and peaceable divine of our communion, Dr. Chr. Potter, in his letter to Mr. Vicars, 1629; with  
some

some arguments tendered by him to his friend, a warm anti-remonstrant, in order to his conviction. I presume you know (for it is apparent out of public records) that our reformed churches in England, France, Germany, &c. by the advice of their worthiest doctors, have still offered to the *Lutherans* all christian amity, peace and communion, and desired them, conjured them, to join all together the right hands of fellowship, though those virulent fiery adders of *Saxony* would never give ear to the voice of those wise charmers. — In *Poland*, the *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*, being of a better temper, have long lived in a heavenly and brotherly concord and communion, both of them (at the same time) retaining their old opinions. Now say, good master *V.* what think you? Do the *Lutherans* erre fundamentally, or not? If so, then they have no union with God, nor connection with Christ the head. With what conscience then could our churches and worthies offer them their communion, and desire it? If not, how then doth the *Arminian* erre fundamentally, since the *Lutheran* maintains the same opinion, with many more and worse? And again; With what conscience can the *Arminian*, as properly such, be rejected out of our communion, when the *Lutheran*, who is as bad,



bad, and far worse, is invited to it, and would (by our church) very joyfully be admitted? Solve me this riddle, but solve it substantially and solidly, *Et eris mihi magnus Apollo*".

HERE I would leave the reader to his own farther reflections upon the subject, and to make his applications as he shall think proper.

WHAT our author says, in the same letter, concerning the famous *Gerard Vossius*, is, as our lawyers speak, full in point to the same purpose. "Of him I will say no more but this: They that know the reading and judgement of that man, by his works, will confess that there lives not this day in Europe, any one more learned: And by the relation of some persons of credit, and since that, by himself, when he was with me of late in Oxford, (h) I knew that when the miserable schism (occasioned by the Dort-confession) was at the hottest in those countries, he never sided with either faction, but would repair to both their churches and communions, to testify that

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(h) In the year 1627, Dr. *Potter* being then provost of Queen's-college there.

he meant to keep peace with both". — Bishop *Carleton*, who was well acquainted with him, had a high opinion of his integrity as well as peaceableness, and assured Dr. *Potter*, that he knew him to be "a very honest man". — In regard to occasional communion, other instances of the laudable moderation and prudence of several pious and public-spirited men in those times and countries, and in a very difficult crisis, may be seen in *Brandt's* valuable history, and in the abridgement of it.

To return to the farther prosecution of the subject of church-communion, proceeding from the passage where we ended with Archbp. *Wake*.

10. ANOTHER learned Prelate asserts with great freedom and judgement, "That a right to *church-communion* depends on receiving and embracing "the faith once delivered to the saints", and not upon any other doctrines of later date, by what authority soever published or declared". Bp. *Sherlock*, vol. 4. disc. 12.

11. IT was a noble declaration of Archbishop *Laud* in his epistle, dedicatory to King *Charles I.* before his learned book against *Fisher*, viz. "I have [in this work]

endeavoured to lay open those wider gates of the catholic church, confined to no age, time, or place, nor knowing any bounds, but that faith which was once (and but once for all) delivered to the saints".

12. THE learned and famous Dr. *Edw. Bernard* entertained generous sentiments concerning christian communion. "He wished that peace and unity might be restored among the churches of a different communion, by removing the *causes* of those disputes wherewith the christian world is rent asunder, and purging christianity of the leaven of the *schoolmens* opinions, but without hurting pure and uncorrupted christianity as delivered in the gospels", &c. *Biogr. Brit.* vol. 2. p. 757.

13. MR. *Le Clerc*, in his book concerning the choice of our opinion amongst the different sects of christians, with great moderation and good sense writes thus: "Whatever christians acknowledge the books of the New Testament for the only rule of faith and practice; who sincerely conform their lives to that rule; who allow of no idolatry, nor treat others ill, that they may profess they believe certain doctrines which they do not believe; all such are to be received, by all truly christian churches or soci-



societies, into brotherly communion and fellowship, in all acts of christian worship and profession".

14. THE large and liberal sentiments of Archbp. *Usher* on this head, may be seen in his declaration set forth by Dr. *Parr*, (in the appendix to the life of that prelate :) Also in his *Body of divin.* p. 398.

15. THE late Mr. *Edw. Waple*, in his will, makes this charitable and christian declaration, viz. "I profess myself to be in union of charity with the whole catholic church of Christ, and in desire of external communion with it; — but lamenting its imperfections and divisions, and the manifest deviations of the whole church from its true pattern," &c: Vid. *pref. before his Sermons.* 1729.

16. "I continue constant (saith Dr. *Hammond*) to the doctrine of the catholic church, and maintain the inward communion of charity with all the true churches of God, wheresoever they are, and with all particular churches — so far as to embrace them with the arms of christian charity, to join even with the erroneous churches, so far as not erroneous, i. e. to embrace all catholic truth wheresoever it

is, separating only from the corruptions of it". (*Pract. catech.* lib. 2. sect. 1.) "For since (as we may here aptly connect the observation of Dr. *Jer. Taylor*) no church of one name [i. e. of any particular denomination] is infallible; a wise man may have either the misfortune, or a reason, to believe of every one [church] in particular, that she errs in some article or other; [and therefore] either he cannot communicate with any [church] or else he may communicate with all [churches] that do not make a sin, or the profession of an error, to be the condition of their communion." *Lib. of proph.* sect. 22.

17. ARCHBP. *Tillotson* "thought, that the less the communion of the church was clogged with disputable opinions, or practices, the world would be the happier, consciences the freer, and the church the quieter". Bp. *Burnet*, serm. at his funeral.

18. IT is a just and generous observation of Mr. *Seagrave*, "True christians, use what communion they will, are all of one communion, and one church. The church of Christ is always one, tho' the manner and form of it may be

be greatly various". *Observations on the conduct of the clergy*, p. 65. 2d edit.

19. DR. *John Williams*, afterwards bishop of Chichester, speaking of the rancour and bigotry and cramped notions of church-communion, which prevailed in those times of party-divisions (towards the close of the last century) makes this just remark; that "after all this spleen and opposition, such partizans must come, if ever they be happy, to join in the church triumphant, with those whom, too often, they refuse to converse and communicate with here in the church militant". *Serm. at the funeral of Dr. Thomas Jekyll*. And bishop *Wilson* avers with great truth, "That if we shall be shut out of heaven for our sins, it will be no great comfort to us, *What church we were members of on earth*". (*Memorials of Dr. Rich. Sherlock*.) No surely; nor can it be any comfort to us in the mean time to profess christianity, when we are strangers to the life and temper, the graces and virtues of it. Those are striking words of *Dr. More*, which should abate the confidence of deluded zealots, of whatever name or party in the christian world. "Whosoever, or whatsoever denomination, is found destitute [for instance] of *humility and charity*, let him call



himself *christian*, as loud as he pleases, he hath really in him not one spark of saving christianity". *Life*, p. 172.

20. THOSE of the Roman communion entertain high notions of their church, as being the only *true* church, and the members thereof the only orthodox and catholic christians; whereas archbishop Abbot upon much better grounds affirms, "They are truly *orthodox* and right *catholics*, who teach nothing but that whereof they have evident warrant out of the word of God". (*Visibility of the true church*, Lond. 1624, p. 103, 104.) (i) — And Bp. Davenant ob-

serving

(i) Concerning *catholicism* in its true sense and latitude, It may, I conceive, be of use to give a short account of it from some of the earliest writers of our protestant church. The *Institution of a christian man*, published by authority in 1537, speaks thus of the matter. "In what part soever of the world there may be founde any nombre of people, of what sorte, state, or condition soever they be, which do beleue in one god the father, creatour of all thinges, and in one lord Iesu Christ his sonne, and in one holy gode, and do also professe, and haue al one faith, one hope, and one charitie, accordyng as is prescribed in holy scripture, — and do all consents in the right vse of the sacramentes of Christ, we may boldly pronounce and say, that there is this holy church, the very spouse and body of Christ, the very kingdom of Christ, and the veray temple of god". On the ninth article. And, on the same article, the *Necessary doctrine and exaltation*, published by the same authority in 1543, observes, That as the unity of this holy church of Christ,

showing how liberally those narrow-minded men, infected with the old leaven of the Donatists, bestow the title of *schismatics*

with so

Christ, is not divided by distance of place, nor by diversity of traditions & ceremonies, diversely observed in diverse churches, for good order of the same", so neither is it always even by diversity of opinions, different churches being still but "one church in god, though there be not in all things therein unity of opinions". — And farther: "This church of Englande, and other known particular churches, in which Christ's name is truly honored, called on, and gathered in faith & baptism, be members of the holy catholike church, when they merelie profess & teache the faith & religion of Christ, according to the scripture & the apostolic doctrine";

— A manuscript (hereafter to be cited) of much the same date with the *Necessary doctrine*, and written by a worthy sufferer for religion in those times, gives the same account of "the catholike church, or vniuersal congregation of christen men", adding, "The heart of this church is Iesus Christ, and euery one that beleueth in the name of Iesu Christ [professing that he is come in the flesh, and that he is the sonne of the living god] is a member of the same".

So that, upon the whole, we may now see the justness of that short and clear description of a catholic christian given by Mr. *Rowles*, in his explication of the creed, viz. "He that heartily believes all that Iesus Christ hath revealed, and sincerely endeavours to do all that he hath commanded, is the true Catholic, of what church or nation soever he be".

Finally, That was a truly catholic christian, as well as a very good man and sincere protestant, who advised his friends, — "Give your catholicism its pro-

/ with other hard names, on protestants, dissuades these last from treating their fellow-protestants in the same manner, or excluding any sincere christians from their communion. *Nostrum est ab hac schismaticâ pravitate abhorre, & communionem fraternam cum omnibus christianis ecclesiis conservare & profiteri, quas à Christo capite per hæresin aut idololatriam nondum disjunctas, aut ab aliis ecclesiis propter usurpatam tyrannidem, minimè fugiendas judicamus*. Epist. ad J. Duræum.

21. The same good bishop observes farther, and very rightly, that it favours too much of a *schismatical* spirit to refuse admitting into brotherly communion any churches (tho' of a different denomination) who seriously desire such admission, and only vary from us in some matters of opinion, or other points of inferior consideration. "*Haud dubitem affirmare, inter ecclesiarum doctores, illos qui falluntur & tamen communionem fraternam cum aliis retinere parati sunt, esse à schismate coram*

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per worth:— Be only *Christians*, and only follow God and truth. Adhere steadily to the cause of christian liberty. This comprehends, and cordially receives, All who are of the faith of the Son of God".

Deo



Deo magis excusatos, quam qui veras opinioniones in hisce controversiis tuentur, & mutuam interim communionem cum aliis ecclesiis eam desiderantibus aspernantur". Ibid.

22. AND finally he gives this friendly caution to governors of churches, not to be too strict or precise (as some protestants are to this day) in their demands of particular forms and confessions from those brethren in the faith, who are desirous to communicate with them and their churches. "*Oportet rectores ecclesiarum suæ ac communis infirmitatis conscios, cavere ne dum rigidam nimis ac minime necessariam a suis exigunt confessionem, dulcissimam & maxime necessariam, labefactare videantur christianorum inter se communionem*". Ibid.

23. UPON recollecting the several particulars that have been laid down in this section concerning church-communion, we may here subjoin a charitable consideration or two in regard to our fellow-protestants of the non-conforming denominations, with the proper means of abating their prejudices, and removing the grounds of their separation from us.

(1) Let us hear with patience, and without prejudice, what they have professed

fessed, and continue to profess, in respect  
 of their being in catholic communion with  
 us and our church, notwithstanding their  
 separation; whereas the church of Rome  
 excludes both them and us from having  
 any share in that common privilege of  
 christians, and condemns us all alike as  
 excommunicates and aliens from the chris-  
 tian society. — Mr. *Nath. Taylor*, a writer  
 and divine of note, and well acquainted  
 with their general sentiments, thus pub-  
 licly declares on the behalf of himself  
 and his seceding brethren, considered as  
 our fellow-christians, upon large and ca-  
 tholic principles. “We do not separate  
 from the church of England, as she is a  
 part of the catholic church. For we pro-  
 fess to own the same *Lord*, the same *faith*,  
 the same *baptism*; which are the very  
 things that make her a part of the catholic  
 church: We still have communion in those  
 essential things with her, and with the  
 whole catholic church; and therefore must  
 be acknowledged still to be members of the  
 catholic church”. *On church-communion,*  
*ch. 8.*

(2) THE catholic-spirited Mr. *Howe* of-  
 ten gave it as his sense, “That an accom-  
 modation of matters between the [esta-  
 blished] church and the dissenters, would  
 be

be THE MOST EFFECTUAL WAY (and I verily believe it) TO KEEP OUT POPE-  
 RY (k). — And the best way, he said,  
 to put an end to nonconformity, would be,  
 by giving due liberty under the national  
 settlement, and laying aside needless clogs,  
 that would give occasion to endless de-  
 bates. Vid. *Life*, p. 70, 128.

(3) If we should look back towards the  
 beginning of the last century, we should  
 see what proceedings were then thought to  
 be among the principal causes of nonconfor-  
 mity, and what the most likely means of re-  
 conciling men to the church, Dr. *Fr. White*,  
 bishop

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(k) It may well demand the attention of protestants  
 of all denominations, that the Romanists are continually  
 at work, under various disguises, and unheeded, to create  
 and keep up *divisions* among them. It is the grand  
 policy of the church of Rome to foment and perpetuate  
 such differences; and none know how to do this bet-  
 ter, than the sons of *Layola*, wherever they can find  
 footing. See the bull of indulgence of pope *Pius V.*  
 ("the servant of the servants of God".) A. D. 1566.  
 "We will — that a total infamy may be broughe  
 upon the *heretics* and their posterities by a *perpetual*  
*discord* and *contention* among themselves, by which  
 means they may either speedily perish by God's wrath,  
 or continue in *eternal difference*, being the objects of  
 reproach to Jew, Turk, and heathen, nay, to the devils  
 themselves". That curious book, *Foxes and firebrands*,  
 will convince any sensible protestant, that we can  
 never be too much upon our guard against the numerou  
 devices of popery to set us at variance, and keep us so.



bishop of Ely, in a public and respectful address to Archbp. *Laud*, 1635, speaks with concern as follows. "No one thing hath been a greater scandal, and occasion of withdrawing many from conformity, than the prophane negligence of some conformable ministers; than their loosenesse of life; their avarice and ambition, in heaping together benefices and promotions (1); and than a grosse neglect in discharging their duty, either in their own persons, or

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(1) Dr. *Wake*, bishop of Lincoln, in his famous charge to the clergy of his diocese, 1709, remonstrates at large, and with great force of argument, against some other gross corruptions, which are a stain upon the sacred profession, and render the ministry of the delinquents ineffectual. One sample may suffice here, which we find in the dedication prefixed to that charge. "The dignity of your order can never long maintain its credit, if once a *corrupt traffic* prevails among Us; so that the *best benefices*, instead of being bestowed upon those who for piety and learning, the best deserve them, shall be exposed to such as will give the *most money* for them; or submit to the most sordid and unjust compliances, in order to the obtaining of them". — Bp. *Latimer's* remonstrances, in his court-sermons, on such heads, are well known. But many of the abuses he complained of, have since been amended. Time will remove the rest. In the mean while, the church of England (to her honour be it spoken) gives no countenance to such abuses, and many of our laws are point-blank against them. If laws are disregarded, what effect can subscriptions have?

or by entertaining and rewarding able and sufficient curates". And he says, on the other hand; "One thing is of great moment to persuade people to live in conformity and unity of the [established] church; to wit, the holy and religious conversation of conformable men; (m) when people shall observe conformable ministers, diligent and industrious in serving God, and promoting the salvation of christian souls committed to their charge; when they behold in them, peaceable, sober, and virtuous conversation; and that they are no lesse diligent in sowing the seed of grace, than heretics and schismatics are in sowing tares. &c". He also adds; "Your grace in your metropolitical visitation [1634.] hath begun a good worke, in taking this into your religious consideration, and you have endeavoured

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(m) Mr. *Andr. Marvell* (a gentleman of great note and esteem in parliament, in the reign of Charles II) being perfectly well acquainted with the principles of the several parties about church-matters in those times, makes this reflection. "A good life is a clergyman's best syllogism, and the quaintest oratory; and till the clergy out-live the fanatics [or outshine them in their life and tempers] they will never get the better of them, nor be able to preach — with any effect or authority. They should be lowly-minded, and no railers". *Hist. &c.* p. 63.

deavoured a reformation. God almighty vouchsafe to give a blessing and good successe to your pious intention, and that by your grace's authority, the scandal before-mentioned may be removed out of our church". *Dedic. before treatise of the sabbath.*

We cannot better conclude this section, than with the following devout prayer of the church for unity and peace among christians.

"GIVE thy grace, O God, to all christians to lay seriously to heart the great dangers which they and their holy religion are in, by reason of their unhappy divisions. Take away from them, all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder them from godly union and concord: That as there is but one body, and one spirit, and one hope of their calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all; so, they may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity; and may, with one mind, and one mouth, glorify thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

S E C T.



**SECTION V.**

*The right of private judgement, and free inquiry, upon religious topics. The reformation of the church of England from popery, was founded on this principle.*

1. "THE liberty of private judgement in religion, is an inherent right of every man, and confirmed to every christian by the gospel". *Dr. Rogers, pref. to eight sermons.*

2. "IT is not in the power of any one to abandon his private judgement, while he remains a MAN. Private judgement is inseparable from human nature, and cannot be utterly extinguished, tho' some have so defaced it, that it is hardly visible". *Mr. Leslie; dissertation concerning private*

*K*

*judg-*

judgment, &c. See also Mr. W. *Law's* case of reason, 1731, p. 122, &c.

3. "The nature, and the virtue too, of all religion, consists in a free and willing choice, in the consent and approbation of our minds, in the sincerity and integrity of our hearts, in our being fully persuaded of the truth of what we believe, and of the goodness of what we practice. Whatsoever is not done with this assurance of faith, is neither well in itself, nor can it be acceptable to God. — The nature of religion is such, as makes it a strict *personal* duty incumbent upon every man; and whatever of this kind is done, must be done by *Ourselves*. — We cannot, if we would, conform our faith to the dictates of *Another*, and believe just as he believes, and because he believes so; nor can it ever possibly be lawful, upon any account, to comply with, or agree to any thing in religion, that is contrary to our judgement, and the inward persuasion of our minds; to profess for truth, what we believe to be a wrong faith, or false doctrine; and to worship God after any other manner, than that which we conceive to be most agreeable to the divine will. In these matters we can neither give, nor can another usurp any

any authority over our consciences: (n) nor can we submit them to any other ruler, but God and our own reason." *Dr. Ibbot, form. bef. the lord-mayor, 1729.*

It is absurd to suppose, that any man can be saved by the faith of another, or by any belief but what is truly his own (o). There is no possible method of having a faith of his own, properly so call-

ed. What, for instance (as a smart writer once asked *Dr. Rogers*), hath the conscience of a parliament or convocation to do to influence my conscience, who am allowed by God and nature to judge for myself? Had men but the quiet choice of their religion, they would be as easy, as in the choice of their diet, or dress."

(o) "God has given to every man rational faculties, and understanding, and will, and capacities large enough to take in all that is necessary to salvation. Can any reason be given, why any man must be obliged to understand with another's understanding, rather than to see with another's eyes, or hear with another man's ears?" *Dr. Sykes, external peace of the church.* — Another, speaking of implicit faith, says; "The excellency of it is, to believe what a man least understands, or entirely to subdue his understanding, and believe without it." *Letter to Pilatusherus Oxoniensis, 1719.* — Just so did the popish devotees (and do still) trust to other mens works, to supply the defects of their own. Our reformers wisely cautioned the people against this childish dependence. Vid. *Lord Cromwell's* injunctions, 1537.



ed, without building it entirely upon what appears right to his own judgement, such as it is, after his best endeavours for information, and his sincerest care to find out what God requires in the gospel. — No one can have a faith of his own, who makes not use of his own judgement, in fixing in his mind what God calls upon him to believe, as necessary to a christian. — Let what will be the consequence of this, it is the only rule God has left him to walk by. Without this, he will be so far from “contending for the faith once delivered to the saints”, that he cannot know so much as what that faith is, nor have any faith at all to contend for. — “Our church was reformed from popery, not upon the bottom of infallibility, or incontestable authority, but upon that of appealing to Christ himself in his gospel”. Bp. *Houdly*, Sermon on *Jude*, ver. 3. and on *1 Thess.* v. 21. 5. “OUR religious establishment, saith a later and very accomplished prelate of our church, is founded on the right of private judgement; and freely allows to others, that liberty which it hath vindicated to itself”. Bp. *Lowth*; affize sermon at *Durham*.

DR.

6. DR. Fiddes, tho' not so intire a friend to liberty, yet seems to make no scruple upon the whole to admit, — "that the noble claim of right which christians have to judge for *themselves*, was the *foundation* of the *reformation*. — In the spiritual society (he says) every man has undoubtedly a right of judging for himself: even when God declares his will by express or immediate revelation, this privilege of private judgement, is not excluded". *Life of card. Wolsey*, p. 342. 343.

7. AND DR. W. Baker, in his discourse intituled, *The authority of the church in controversies of faith*, acknowledges, — "that the authority of the church deprives no man of his right of *private judgement*, or of the privilege of thinking and judging for himself. — We [the ministers of the church of England] do not so determine the sense of Scripture, as to preclude any one the use of his own understanding; every member of our church is left to his own liberty to think and judge for himself as he pleases"; (p) and (he might, I suppose, have added) as reason shall direct him.

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(p) And yet Mr. Sturmy, another learned and contemporary divine with the former at Cambridge, cur-

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8. "The right of private judgement (says another clergyman, very truly,) was the very basis of the reformation, whatsoever mistaken turn it afterwards took", Mr. Seagrave's *observations upon the conduct of the clergy*.

9. ARCHBISHOP Cranmer was one of our principal reformers. His writings are now scarce, and less known. Judge of his sentiments on this head from the following declarations, which may well deserve notice. — "I, having exercised myself in the study of Scripture, have learned now to go alone, and do *examine*, and *judge*, and write all such weighty matters myself, although (I thank God) I am neither so arrogant, nor so wilful, that I will refuse the

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tails this rule, putting it under the following restriction, viz. "We may claim the liberty of *free-thinking*, where we do not interfere with, or contradict any thing in the *liturgy*, *articles*, *canons*, or *homilies* of the church". *Pref. to his discourses on several subjects*, Cambr. 1716.

This being the case, freedom of inquiry, and freedom of judgement, beyond these limits, are at an end. What then becomes of our boasted privileges in those respects, and why do we extend them so far as we usually do, if they are really thus circumscribed? — Be pleased only to re-examine the *canons* and *homilies*. — What will be the consequence?



the good advice, counsel and admonition of any man, be he man or master, friend or foe. — “The more diligently matters be *searched out* and *discussed*, the more clearly the craft and falsehood of the subtil papists will appear. And therefore Dr. *Richard Smyth* [a papist] exhorteth all men to leave off disputing and reasoning [upon points of religion] by learning, and to give firm credit unto the *church* (q) “As who should say, that the truth of any matter

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that)

(q) Again: Speaking of the same doctor, “This papist, saith he, like a politic man, doth right wisely provide for himself and his *church*, — that all men should leave searching for the truth, and stick hard and fast to the church, meaning himself and the church of Rome”, p. 446. And farther; — “When you see none other shift, you be fain to fly to the *church* for your shot-anchor”, p. 184.

The *church* is always the sheet-anchor of the papists, their infallible criterion of right and wrong. “The understanding of the scriptures, said *Bristow*, is in the *church*. And the churches judgement is infallible”. Which we are to take upon trust from Mr *Bristow*. But Dr. *Fulke*, who thorowly mawled him, thought his assertion impudent and blasphemous. “What shall I say to this impudent blasphemer, that alloweth none other tryal of holy scripture but the *authoritie of the church*? Retentive against *Bristow*; 1580. p. 130, 134, 36. — *Smyth* has a fine plea from St. *Austin*, in favour of the *church*, and for submission to her authority; *Contra Ecclesiam nemo pacificus senserit*. “Wolde god

that is in question, might be tried out without debating and reasoning by the word of God, whereby (as by the true touchstone) all mens doctrines are to be tried and examined. But the truth is not ashamed to come to the light, and to be tried to the uttermost. For as pure gold, the more it is tried, the more pure it appeareth, so is all manner of truth. — "The chaffe cannot be tried out from the pure corn (that is to say, the untruth from the very truth) without threshing, winnowing, and fanning, searching, debating, and reasoning". *Answer to the bishop of Winchester* (1551. fol.) p. 264, 445, &c.

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10. THESE

god that all men and women readyng or hearinge this notable and catholique sentence, wold receyue it, and in al pointes of our religion folowe it. For then there shold not be among vs christen people so many schysmes, and yll opinions agaynst the saythe, as they now are, but they shoulde shortly ceasse, and the true doctryne of Christ, and his church florische agayne". *Defence of the sacrifice of the masse made and set furth by master Richarde Smyth doctour in diuinitie, and reader of the kynges byghnes lesson of diuinite in his maiesties universitie of Oxforde.* 1546. fo. 7, 8. — To secure his church and her authority, he avails himself of the common artifice. "Beware, good christen reader of Luthers pestilent and contagious doctrine. Reade not his bookes, nor none of his disciples makynge. They are full of poyson, althoughe they seme neuer so good and frutefull, as commonly doth all heresy, at the first taste and syght". *Ibid.* fo. 13.

10. THESE being the sentiments of our prime reformer, well might a much later dignitary of the reformed church assert,—"that even general councils must submit their decrees to the examination of every christian, to see whether they contain nothing contrary to scripture". *Arch-dac. St. George, Exam.* p. 160. And the argument might be carried, *à fortiori*, much farther.



**B. S.** *Some reflections upon the use of reason  
in matters of religion.*

**I.** **I**T is the principle and interest of the church of Rome to disparage reason, and decry the exercise of it, in religious concerns. — In the times preceding the reformation, reason lay suppressed, and the voice of it could not be heard. Church, and church-authority, supplied the room of it, and answered every purpose of argument and conviction. *Pro. omni ratione in theologicis, " ecclesia dixit". — Sit ergo domina mater ecclesia baculus in aquâ fractus; tamen absit ut crederem quod video; q. d.* God forbid that I should believe my senses: The church is above them, and reason must yield to her dictates. — These simple soules that trowen stedfastlie, as holie *cherche* troweth, — are made safe through praiers and trothe of her [i. e. *their*] moder the *cherche*. — This woman of Canaan betokeneth holie *cherche*, that asketh helpe of our lorde for simple uncunning soules. — For the greate trouthe and faithe of holie *cherche*, he grantyd to her all she wolle". *Exp. of gosp. for 2d S. in*

*S. in lent, for the use of Sarum.* See in *Hilton*, *scala perf.* par. 2. c. 10. ["*Mother*, in the 5th commandment, signifieth the *church*, as *father* signifieth the *prelate* of it". *Peckham's* constit. 1281] And in those days not only the *simple uncunning souls* (the common people) but even the *clergy* were most of them very ignorant; nor was more required of them in these matters, than only to believe as the *church* believed; unless, as *Lyndwood* informs us, they could bear the charges of *studying*, and had *masters* to instruct them. Vid. *Stillingsfleet's* charge, 1690. — *Knox* the Jesuite intimates, that *reason* overthrows the christian religion, which he says is built only on the authority of the church". *Daille's* apol. pref. p. 11, 12. Note: Had he said *Roman* instead of *christian* religion, he had said right (r). The Roman

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(r) The doctrine of *church-authority* in matters of faith, was not known in the earliest days of christianity, but was introduced afterwards, by that despotic church which arose by degrees to an enormous height, and usurped an absolute sway in such matters, over the whole christian world. "The *chirche* of the *clergie* may not erre in matere of feith", was a potent and settled maxim, which would admit of no dispute. Yet even in these darkest and most iniquitous times (about the middle of the 15th century) the famous Bishop *Petock*, a man of great freedom and largeness of thought, considering the age in which he lived, had the courage

Roman religion is indeed founded on the authority of the church, which the christian is not: and it is little less than blasphemy to intimate that it is so founded, making it to be of human invention.

(2) BISHOP Juel, in his reply to Dr. Cole, speaks of a popish bishop, who (in the reign of Q. Mary) "sitting in judgement upon a poore man in a case of religion, and hearing him alleage the scriptures and other authorities for himselfe, rounded a gentleman in the care that sate nexte to him, with these wordes: *Naye, if we strive with them in scriptures and reasoning, we shall never have donne. We must proceede against them with the lawe*". — Is the law then at variance with the scriptures and reason, and doth it condemn both? The popish law, in many cases, did; and here that prelate took advantage of the culprit, which, by scripture and reason, he saw he could

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to oppose that authority, tho' he afterwards suffered, and was branded as an heretic, as might well be expected, for so bold an attempt. See his life by Mr. Lewis, 1744, p. 200, 201, 202; and the preface, p. 14; where that writer says, and nobody doubts it, "That the authority of the church, or the clergy, and the infallibility of their determinations, was the test and shibboleth of a true churchman at that time". — May it never be so hereafter!



could not; and therefore he made short work of it, in effect condemning both, together with their abettor. Thus sometimes, even iniquity, we know, hath been established by law, according as the temporal interest, or prejudice, or passion of men in power prevailed. But in great Britain, we may hope that the free study of the scripture, and the free exercise of reason, will always be protected and encouraged by law. — It is to be noted, that the free use of reason, assisted by the restoration of human learning, and the invention of printing, gave the first and greatest blow to popery; and these will always continue, under the blessing of heaven, to be the principal means of preserving and promoting the reformation.

II. REASON has been too often vilified, and continues still to be so, by zealous sects, and less judicious persons, even among protestants.

(1) "AWAY with this judge and false esteemer of things, I mean reason. Blind reason", &c. T. Becon; postil. on Triu. Sund. fol. 294. Lond. 1566. — This continued to be the disparaging notion of many learned men for a long time after, even to the days of Hooker, and down to the

the beginning of the last century, when Dr. Covel, in his defence of that learned man, wrote as follows. — "Is there no other matter of reproof in maister Hooker's writings, but that virtues must be faults? But hee, you say, seeketh to prove matters of divinity with the strength of *reason*. Indeed this is a great fault, &c. But so it is, that through an ignorant zeal of honouring the scriptures, the name of the *light of nature* is made hateful with men; the star of *reason* and *learning*, and all other such like helps, beginneth no otherwise to be thought of, than as if it were an unlucky comet, or as if God had so accursed it, that it should never shine, or give light in things concerning our duty any way towards him; but be esteemed as that star in the *Revelation* (s) called *wormwood*. Which being fallen from heaven, maketh rivers and waters, into which it falleth, so bitter, that men tasting them, die thereof. A number there are (as the Doctor goes on) who thinke they cannot admire as they ought, the power and authority of the *word of God*, if in things divine they should attribute any force to man's *reason*", art. 20. So little had men dilated their minds in those days, and so narrow were their conceptions.

(2) Nor

(s) Chap. viii. 10.

(2) Nor did R. James I. discover any marks of that great wisdom for which he was often extolled by his flatterers; when he advised the States general of Holland, in regard to their disputes upon the five articles; (t) to suppress altogether the liberty of reasoning, as the only way to peace,

(t) By the way, what ado was made, in that pragmatical age, with those five abstruse points; of which a man might securely live and die ignorant! Dr. More said enough about them in few (I was going to say, in five) words, when he expressed his wish that they were reduced, as surely they might have been, to this One, viz. "None shall be saved without sincere Obedience". *Life*, p. 176. — We may be thankful to God that we are less troubled with these perplexing questions in the present age, tho' some would still revive them. In my opinion, such persons would do well to mind that grave and salutary counsel of good Bishop Usher, "Men should not dogmatize in these points"; and the pacific remark subjoined by Dr. Parr, who wrote his life: "There have been, saith he, and still will be, different opinions, concerning these great and abstruse questions of predestination, and free will, which yet may be tolerated, and consist in any church, if the maintainers of either the one side or the other, will use that charity they ought, and forbear publicly to condemn, rail at, or write against each other". *Life*, p. 37. What in the days of these two learned and worthy divines, were looked upon as *abstruse questions*, have since their time been abundantly and most happily elucidated by men of the first figure in the lettered world for strength of reason, and clearness of judgement. But this could never have been done in the days of system and thralldom of sentiments.



peace, &c. — And *Bekkius*, a man of some figure at the synod of *Dort*, said openly at that solemnity, That some of the arguments of the remonstrants deserved no answer, since they were grounded, not upon scripture, but upon *reason*. (Vid. *abr. of Brandt's hist.* p. 320, and 472.) Much like those perverse men of antiquity, of whom *S. Jerom* speaks; *Nolunt discipulas ratione discutere sive bona sive mala.* In *Isai*, l. 9.

(3) NOR will you wonder to find, that the same sort of prejudice, in disfavour of reason, continued to pervade the minds of many at another synod, the assembly of divines at *Westminster*: Of which we have glaring evidences remaining to this day. One of the members, the famed *Ant. Burges*, speaks the general sense of preachers in those times. “No greater adversary in the world (saith he) to the pure worship of God, than man’s natural *reason*, and carnal apprehensions”. *Sermons*, p. 355.

(4) “THE plausibleness of *arminianism*, and the congruity it hath in sundry points with the principles of corrupt nature, and of carnal *reason*”, was the language even of the learned Bp. *Sanderson*, before he relinquished the narrow principles of his educa-

education. But he acted an ingenuous part, by owning and rectifying his mistakes afterwards (which controversialists seldom do) thereby following his own rule given to such men, viz. "To acknowledge freely, and readily to revoke, whatsoever error, or mispision, or exorbitancy, hath passed from their pen, when it shall be fairly shewed them, and their judgements convinced thereof, rather than to seek to relieve themselves, by excuses, colours, or evasions". *Pax eccl.*

(5) "I hope, says Mr. Chynell, to be saved by faith; yet master Chillingworth hopes [a mere calumny, be sure] that a man may be saved by reason". *Vid. life of Chill.* p. 327, and elsewhere in that book. *Vid.* p. 162.

(6) "Mr. Andrew Cant preached at Aberdeen in Scotland (I heard him) "Deny your reason and your senses, and believe in the geud covenant, and give the cause a life". *Hickeringill*: vol. 3. part 4. So, as he there remarks, the popish priests say, "Deny your reason and your senses, and believe, &c. Put out Sampson's eyes, and you may lead him by the nose, and make him grind".

(7) Now

(7) Now observe the ill effects of these and the like reveries in disparagement of reason. Unbelievers have taken the hint from such foibles of divines, to disparage revealed religion, tho' under pretence of extolling it. Thus the subtle author of *Christianity not founded on argument*, taking a handle from the crude assertions of a set of moderns, "*Reason*, he would have us believe, is not to be consulted in judging of the evidence, or the sense, of any supposed revelation; nor in forming any of our religious sentiments".

III. THERE is, after all, a medium between extremes, between implicit faith and incredulity. *Reason* is that medium. Reason is the gift of God as well as revelation, and ought therefore to be regarded as such; and revelation itself reminds us, that we ought to be able to render a *reason* of the hope and faith that is in us, relating to divine discoveries; which confirm, improve, and dignify every principle, every sentiment, of natural reason.

1. MR. archdeacon *Orr*, in his theory of religion, hath excellently illustrated this subject, and done honour to revelation, by his judicious remarks in favour of it.

" CHRI-



"CHRISTIANITY hath its foundation in those sentiments which are connatural with the human mind, or which unavoidably spring up in it, in the proper exercise of its *faculties*, &c. p. 259.

2. "HAPPY the man, who has got so much the mastery of all prejudices arising from a wrong association of ideas, as to be able to embrace *truth* and *nature* in his judgements and sentiments, ever following sound *reason*, and that only, and bringing all his opinions whatsoever to the *test* of it". Dr. Duchal, *vol. 1. (1765.) serm. 6.*

3. "It was a constant saying of Dr. Jeffery (archdeacon of Norwich) That what was not agreeable to *reason*, could never be the will of God, who is perfect reason. The doctrine of christianity, he said, was the wisdom of God; and therefore it was an injury done it, to make a foolish representation of it. And as all the forms, in which it had been delivered, were not wise ones; his great aim and endeavour through life was, to throw out of them whatever would not stand the test of *reason*; and he was himself ready at all times to give an answer to any man

that asked him a *reason* of the faith and hope that was in him". *Life*, p. 33.

4. "A system of religion inconsistent with *reason*, is not the system of the *Bible*, nor any way adapted to the human nature". *Turner's* religious and moral letters.

5. "I do very freely acknowledge, that a religion which cannot *reasonably* be accounted for, is not fit for a *rational* creature to own, nor worth his keeping. A man ought to know upon what grounds he takes up his religion, before he professes it; and to give better reason for it, than because it is the religion of the country wherein he lives, or that wherein he was educated". Bp. *Talbot*, serm. bef. Lord Mayor, 1700.

6. "THOSE men that have laid aside the free and impartial use of their *reason*, are just as fit for religion, as sheep and oxen. For they differ only in this, that the one sort are brutes without reason, and the other are brutes with it". Bp. *Parker*, Censure of the platonic philosophy; dedic.

7. "If our religion be not founded in *reason*, it cannot be a religion calculated for

for rational creatures. — A *rational* faith does not only imply no inconsistency in its notion, but is indeed the only kind of assent, which deserves the name of faith". *Dr. Dodwell's serm. on rational faith.*

8. " FAITH gives a new light to the soul, but it does not put out our eyes. — WHATSOEVER IS AGAINST RIGHT REASON, THAT, NO FAITH CAN OBLIGE US TO BELIEVE". *Bp. Taylor worthy communic.* P. 74, 75.

9. " To believe this, or that, to be true, is not in my power, nor depends upon my will, but upon the light, and evidence, and information which I have". *Dr. Ibbot, on the office of the civil magistrate.* Finally,

10. " RELIGION is founded in reason: It supposes the free use and exercise of our reasonable faculties, and is therefore to be propagated after a manner suitable to them; that is, in a rational way of persuasion. All that external force can do, is to make men hypocrites, and compel a formal exterior assent". *Dr. Fiddes, life of card. Wolsey, p. 34.*



## S E C T. VI.

*Of free inquiry into the sense of Scripture.*

1. **T**HE study of the Scripture seems to be under too much restraint in most countries, from the imposition of human articles of faith, and the prevalence of systematical opinions in divinity. — It is to be wished, that no restraints of this kind were permitted to subsist any longer, and that men were allowed full liberty to trace out the sense of the sacred books to the utmost of their power, in every christian kingdom. There can be no real danger from this liberty, whatever men addicted to systems may suspect, or men of politic schemes may suggest to the contrary.

2. BEFORE experimental philosophy took place,

place, conjectures carried all before them. The *royal society* in England, and the like societies abroad, discovered the errors of former ages, discarded arbitrary systems, and settled natural philosophy upon its true bottom.

3. WOULD it not be a most desirable thing, that we had in this kingdom a society instituted, and countenanced by the government, for investigating the book of revelation, as we have for investigating the book of nature, and thereby doing honour as well as justice to both? — But will not human prescriptions, like *Aristotle's* dictates in another case, be a bar to this, and clap an embargo upon such inquiries?

4. THE wise and thoughtful Lord *Bacon*, was for throwing off all such restraints, and allowing free liberty, in both cases alike. — “ Let no man, saith he, imagine that we can go too far, or be too well studied, in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works, divinity or philosophy; but rather let men *awaken* themselves, and vigorously urge and pursue an endless progress or proficiency in *both*; only let them beware, lest they apply knowledge

to swelling, not to charity; to ostentation, not to use, &c. *De augment. scient.* 1. 1.

5. AND *right reason* must be our rule, in judging about the true sense, analogy, and design of scripture.

6. "I can have no better expounder of Scripture (any more than of human decrees) says Lord *Falkland*, than *reason*. If I shall not be damned for following my *reason* (tho' I mistake) in interpreting the sense of human decrees, Why should I for mistaking the sense of *scripture*? (u) Or why am

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(u) A question which some may think may be pertinently applied to peremptory sentences of damnation passed upon dissentients, in whatever formularies of belief we meet with them. An ingenious writer, in his usual way of exposing improprieties, takes notice of these solemn freedoms with divine subjects. "Ancient fathers, he tells us, made the [apostles] creed, the shot and total sum of faith. Since which [times,] how many *arrears* and *after- reckonings* have men brought us in? to which if we will not pay our belief, our souls must be arrested without bail, upon pain of damnation". Dr. *Fuller*, holy state, b. 3. c. 20. Much wiser and better would it be for christians to forbear such rash condemnation of each other, and to speak and act with more mildness and charity. "Is any man to be *damned*, if he believe not what the church, councils, fathers have spoken? A papist may chance to say so: but will either reason or conscience say so with him?

Let



am I a less fit interpreter of the one, than of the other? — “To them who follow their *reason* in the interpretation of the *scriptures*, God will either give his grace for assistance to find the truth, or his pardon if they miss it”. *Disc. on infallibility*. — In this case, all that can reasonably be said is this: “It concerns all persons to see, that they do their best to find out the truth; and if they do, it is certain, that let the error be [either in itself, or in common estimation] never so damnable, they shall escape the error, or the misery, of being *damned* for

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Let any [man of] religious conscience say, Can he think himself *damned*, because he believes not every thing that the council of *Nice* hath decreed; or what *Hierom.* or *Augustine* have spoken? They have confessed themselves men subject to error. I know they were so: And must I be bound, upon pain of *damnation*, to believe what it may be, in time, they themselves believed not? Dr. *Lighfoot*; remains (1700, 8vo.) p. 265.

It was a proper question asked by Dr. *Pelling*, “Why should I condemn or hate another, because I conceive he erreth in such and such points, when God hath not peremptorily required either him or me to know them at all, but both of us may be ignorant of them with safety? — The way to heaven is obvious enough, and easy to be discovered; viz. by believing the *plain, common, and standing* articles of christianity; and by leading a godly, righteous, and sober life. — Other things are not only remote from our faculties, but very distant too from our great and necessary business”. *On charity*, p. 265, &c.

for it". These were the charitable sentiments of the judicious Bishop *Taylor*. Lib. of proph. sect. 22.

7. NOR ought we to lay too much stress, as hath been done by many, upon *scripture-consequences*, or deductions drawn from certain premises, either found, or supposed to be found, in scripture.

8. LORD *Bacon* long ago saw the fallacy too often attending this way of reasoning, and cautioned against too confident a dependence upon its validity. — "Sometimes, saith his lordship, as great authority is attributed to *inferences*, as to principles. — Men are too apt to usurp the style, *Non ego, sed dominus*; and not only so but to bind it with the thunder and denunciation of curses, and anathema's, to the terror of those, who have not sufficiently learnt out of *Solomon*, that "the causeless curse shall not come". — "Many controversies do merely pertain to that which either is not revealed, or [is not] positive; and many others do grow upon weak and obscure *inferences* or deductions". *De augm. scient.* l. 9. c. 1.

9. DR. *Fuller* is somewhat arch upon dabblers in such deductions. — "As love  
(saith

(saith he) doth descend, and men doat most on their grand-children; so these are indulgent to the deductions of their deductions and consequential inferences, to the seventh generation; making them all to be of the foundation, tho' [they be] scarce of the building, of religion". *Holy state*, b. 3. c. 20.

10. IT is a judicious and solid observation, "That to find out what that faith was, which was once delivered to the saints, as necessary for all christians, there is no other method for a christian; at this distance, to take, but to search those books in which it was at first delivered. And the rule for his direction in that inquiry is, that every thing necessary to be believed by him, considered as a christian, is in those books not left to be gathered by *consequences*, or *implications*, but declared *expresly* to be necessary to his obtaining the favour of God promised to christians". Bp. *Hoody*, serm. on Jude, ver. 3. — Concerning *scripture-consequences*, see the point well discussed, with a becoming temper, as well as clearness and strength of argument, by Dr. *Evans*, in his letters to Mr. *Cumming*; — And a good remark in Bp. *Taylor*, lib. proph. f. 1. n. 6.

SECT.



SECT. VII.

*The judgement of learned men concerning human definitions and restrictions, in regard to such inquiry.*

1. **M** IHI perinde christianæ charitati adversari videtur *tribunal de fide*, ubicunque constituatur;” [scil. five in ecclesiâ reformatâ, five in non reformatâ] *Limborch* to *Mr. Locke*.

2. “THE hammering out so many articles of faith, did a world of mischief, especially when they were turned into ecclesiastical laws, and made obligatory”. *Erasm.* pref. to *Hilar.* cited by *Mr. Brandt*, annot. to his hist. p. 1.

3. “If it be asked, What are the necessary principles of the christian faith, the answer

answer is easy, *viz.* that unless we will leave room for multiplying articles of faith infinitely, they can be no other than what are expressly required to be believed, in order to our obtaining the christian salvation". Dr. *Foster*, *serm.* on schism.

4. THE religion of protestants should be left free. The words of the excellent *Chillingworth* should never be out of remembrance. "By the religion of protestants I do not understand the doctrine or confession of any leader, sect or party, but that wherein they all *agree*, and which they all subscribe, with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule of their faith and actions, that is, The BIBLE. The BIBLE, I say, The BIBLE *only*, is the religion of *protestants*! Whatsoever *else* they believe, besides it, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of *opinion*; but as matter of *faith* and *religion*, neither can they. [N. B.] with coherence to their *own* grounds believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption. — "In a word, there is no sufficient certainty but of *Scripture* only, for any considering man to build upon. This therefore, and this only, I have reason to believe: This I will profess; according

according to this I will live; and for this, if there be occasion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly lose my life; tho' I should be sorry that *christians* should take it from me. Propose to me any thing out of *this* book, and require whether I believe or no, and, seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart, as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this, God hath said so, therefore it is true. — I am fully assured that God does not, and therefore that men ought not, to require any more of any man than this, To believe the scripture to be God's word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it". *Rel. of prot.* par. 1. ch. 6.

5. A very orthodox textuary, and very good man, disapproving of impositions upon christian liberty, and of tying men down to a particular sense of the more general words of scripture, speaks thus: "I am moved to express my dislike of a practice too common among the too many denominations of christians, viz. the imposing their *own* glosses and interpretations of scripture, as the undoubted, certain, and infallible mind and will of Christ. Even *protestant* churches, tho' they have justly cast off the Romish yoke, yet have not sufficiently



sufficiently purged out this *remainder* of popery". Mr. Fox, pref. to the N. T. with references (1722.) p. 15.

6. THE great author quoted just before him, comes in here again with close propriety, and with his usual force and energy. — "This presumptuous imposing of the senses of men upon the *general* words of God, and laying them upon mens consciences together; — this vain conceit, that we can speak of the things of God, better than in the words of God; this deifying our *own* interpretations, and — enforcing them upon *others*; this *restraining* of the word of God, from that *latitude* and *generality*, and the understandings of men, from that *liberty*, wherein Christ and his apostles left them, is, and hath been, the *only* fountain of all the *schisms* of the church, and that which makes them immortal. — Take away these walls of separation, and all will quickly be *one*. — Require of *christians* only to believe in Christ, and to call no man master but him only; let those leave claiming infallibility, that have no title to it; and let them, that in their *words* disclaim it [as protestants do] disclaim it likewise in their *actions*: In a word, — restore christians to their just and full *liberty* of captivating their understanding to  
*Scripture*

ture only ; and [then,] as rivers when they have a free passage, run all to the ocean ; so it may well be hoped, by God's blessing, that universal liberty thus moderated, may quickly reduce christendom to truth and unity". *Rel. of prot. ch. 4.*

7. THE *authority of the church* in matters of faith, has long and often been the subject of debate. How far does that authority extend in regard to articles of faith ? The question cannot be answered more clearly and satisfactorily, than it is by a late prelate of distinguished sense and learning. " No church (saith bishop *Sherlock*) has, nor have all churches together, any authority to make articles of faith : To which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken. — The apostles themselves were but teachers and witnesses of the faith, and had no authority, or commission, to make new articles of faith. — In this divided state of things, no church has a right to be believed on its own word merely, without giving a reason of the faith that is in them. And yet, this pretence of *authority*, is the only thing that can be said, and therefore it always is said, to justify the dominion which the church of Rome has usurped over the faith of christians". *Vol. 4. Disc. 12.*

18. Nor is this any other doctrine in the main, if you well consider it, than what you will find upon inquiry to have been the original doctrine of our reformation. I will give you the best authority for this, that of the first compiler of our articles. Thus Archbishop *Cranmer* speaks in his book against bishop *Gardiner*, 1551. — "The church of Christ is not founded upon itself, but upon Christ and his word. — This church is the pillar of truth, because it resteth upon God's word, which is the true and sure foundation (v). — As the register keepeth all mens wills, and yet hath none authority to add, change, or take away any thing, nor yet to expound the wills, farther than the very words of the will extend unto, even so hath the church

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(v) Upon this foundation, upon this alone, the renowned martyr of those times bishop *Hoper* wished and requested that the doctrines of our English reformation might be erected. "In anye case we must take hede we lai no straw nor stubble vpon the foundation: If we do, it will be burned (1 Cor. iii.) If we do not build vp vpon the foundation, then shal we be shent [reproved] as the Israelits wer". Aggeus 1. Epist. dedicatory to king Edward and the lords of the privy council, prefixed to his book which he intitles, *An ensight and deliberacion vppon the holy prophet Jonas, made and uttered before the kings maiesty, and his most honorable counsell, &c.* 1550.



church no farther power over the holy scripture (which containeth the will and testament of God) but only to keep it, and to see it observed and kept. For if the church proceed further, to make any new articles of faith, besides the scripture, or contrary to the scripture, or direct not the form of life according to the same, then is it not the pillar of truth, nor the church of Christ". — Again: "The whole church cannot make one article of faith", p. 446, 456, 458. — [It may be worth noting here by the way, what was the notion of church-authority in those early days of our reformation, and how different it appears to be from the high claims made by some of our zealous churchmen in after-times. "The auctorytie of the church, is to preach the remission of synnes in the deth of Christ. This auctorytie is the keyes of the kingdome of God that the church hath receyved. And this [auctorytie] is by the church commytted to the minister called of god". MS. in the library of Eman. Coll. Cambr. intituled, *Sundrie workes of divers martyres*. What is here produced was written by Sir Robert Wisdome, a clergyman of note in Cranmer's time, and highly, as well as deservedly, respected by him. You may see some account of this confessor, in *Strype's memorials of Cranmer*, b. 2. c.

28. and perhaps elsewhere also, among the records of the English reformation.]

9. THE same doctrine continued to be asserted both in the church, and in the universities, for a long time after. This was one of the principal conclusions of the famous Dr. *John Rainolds* at the public act in Oxford, 1579, viz. "The authority of the holy scripture is greater than the authority of the church": under which conclusion he said, "The voice of scripture is the voice of God; the voice of the church is the voice of men". *Sex theses de scriptura & ecclesia*. — About half a century afterwards a different doctrine was started in the same schools. Mr. *Peter Heylin*, keeping his act for the degree of doctor in divinity (1633,) with great assurance insisted upon these two points, "*Ecclesia habet auctoritatem in determinandis fidei controversiis*"; And, "*Ecclesia habet auctoritatem interpretandi scripturas sacras*". Dr. *Prideaux*, the royal professor of divinity then in the chair, (afterward a bishop) was hereupon offended, and scrupled not to affirm on the contrary, as follows: "*Ecclesia est mera chimera. Ecclesia nihil docet nec determinat. Controversiæ omnes (theologiæ) melius ad academiam referri possunt, quam ad ecclesiam*". &c. Here was playing at cross-purposes in some earnest. — We may recollect, that

about six years before this, the same disputant had offended the learned professor at another trial of skill in the divinity-school, asserting these two heterodox tenets, "*Ec-clesia nunquam fuit invisibilis*": And, "*Ec-clesia non potest errare*". This making a great noise, brought him under the disrepute of being a papist. Applying to bishop *Laud*, he told him for his encouragement, that he himself had formerly maintained the same two positions in a college-disputation, and had met with the same treatment.

10. THOSE shrewd remarks of the ever-memorable *Hales* of Eton occur here very opportunely to our consideration. — "It hath, he says, been the common disease of christians from the beginning, not to content themselves with that measure of faith, which God and the scriptures have expressly afforded us; but out of a vain desire to know more than is revealed, they have attempted to discuss things, of which we can have no light, neither from reason nor revelation: Neither have they rested here, but upon pretence of *church-authority*, which is none, or tradition, which for the most part is but figment, they have peremptorily concluded, and confidently imposed upon others, a necessity of entertaining conclusions of that nature; and,

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to strengthen themselves, have broken out into divisions and factions, opposing man to man, synod to synod, till the peace of the church vanished, without all possibility of recall". *Tract of schism*. See also his letter to Archbishop *Laud*. Where he repeats and corroborates the former observation; "I count, saith he, in point of decision of church-questions, if I say of the authority of the church, that it is None, I know no adversary that I have, the church of Rome only excepted. For this cannot be true, except we make the church Judge of controversies, the contrary to which we generally maintain against that church".

Dr. *Burnet* of the Charter-house, a person of like largeness of thought and accuracy of judgement with Mr. *Hales* in such matters, was fully of the same opinion with him in this point of church-authority. "With the professors of the reformed religion, the authority of the church, and her definition [or determination in controversial matters] is of no weight or validity", &c. Vid. title-page to the *Expedient*.

N. B. The first compilers of our articles claimed no authority in controversies of faith, as we may reasonably judge from their taking no notice of such authority

in *their* edition; (w) the clause upon that head not having been inserted till several years after, as is, I think, universally conceded, and never doubted.

Now if the church hath really, as Mr. *Hales* asserts, *no* such authority, nor is therefore (as the church of Rome pretends to be) the judge of controversies, it seems to follow very clearly, that the church cannot consistently prescribe to christians any articles of faith or religion in matters of controversy. Which nevertheless we see our church hath done in not a few of her articles.

Is the church then inconsistent herein? The first compilers were not, having claimed  
no

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(w) See that edition in *Sparrow, Wilkins, &c.* — Our reformers were wary upon this point, and they had good reason. For before their time the authority of the church had been carried beyond all bounds. It is plain that whatever share they retained of that authority, it was only a more moderate and modest degree of the old claim of infallibility. Which infallibility the popish doctors grounded upon Christ's promises to his church. "The church is Christes spouse, the foundation and pyllar of the truth, to whome Christe promysed the holye ghost, the spirite of truth, whiche shulde abyde with it for ever, that it shuld not holly erre in the faith". *Dr. Rycharde Smyth's defence of the masse*, 1546. fol. 177.

no such authority. From whence, by the way, we may judge it probable, that their first intention, as shall be seen hereafter, was, that their articles should be only, or chiefly, a declaration of the faith or belief of the English church in the several points exhibited in her articles. Which would justify her to the world in her renunciation of the errors of popery, and condemnation of other bad tenets and practices of those times. — The later editors, proposing to go a step farther and require a general assent and subscription from the clergy, saw, it is very likely, a necessity, in order to make their demands consistent, of asserting an authority in the church to determine in matters of controversy, and consequently to make such demands: Which authority had before been omitted. This, for the present, I take to be the truth of the matter. (x)

BUT be that as it will, if we suppose,

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(x) It may deserve notice, that in the articles of Ireland, composed by the convocation of Dublin, A.D. 1615, the controverted clause is omitted. Which surely was not done without reason, though an over-ruling faction ordered matters otherwise in a subsequent reign. Those original articles may be seen in *Wilkins, Concil.* vol. 4. At the head of them appears, very properly, the true and only solid ground of Protestantism, viz. The Scripture the only Rule of Faith.



on the other hand, that the church hath such authority, we know not where it may end, nor what effects it may produce, when, at certain periods, and on some occasions, it shall be thought fit to put that authority upon the stretch (y). For is there any limit assigned to it by the article? None. The term is general, and the assertion absolute; *The church hath authority in controversies of faith.* What that

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(y) Sir Edw. Dering remonstrated in parliament against this authority, pointing out the ill consequences it would produce. "It will bring, he said, a dangerous influence upon our belief, by subjecting our faith to human resolutions". (*Speech*, 1640.) And he complained at the same time of the unfair treatment which Mr. *Wilkinson*, the learned divinity-lecturer of Magdalen-hall, met with at his examination for orders, from the bishop of Oxford's chaplain; who, being previously resolved to disappoint him, contrived on purpose to embarrass him with captious questions; one of which was this; *Hath the church authority in matters of faith?* The other three were these: *May the king's book of sports be read in the church without offence? — Is bowing to, or before, the altar lawful? — Is bowing at the name of Jesus lawful?* — Here was evidently a stretch of authority in the business of examination, exceeding the bounds prescribed by the law. — However, Mr. *Wilkinson*, perceiving the design, and declining to give peremptory answers to such ensnaring interrogatories, was, in short, denied orders, tho' he had all proper qualifications to fit him for the ministry. — Let learned disputants now reflect. — They may be pleased to re-consider, What are those qualifications, and what the proper tests of them?

that authority is, how it is to be exercised, how far it shall extend, or where it shall terminate, is not specified; nor can we wish that it may be put to the trial. — To come to particulars. If the church hath such authority as has been claimed to her, May she not order, if she pleases, that any one of the various comments on the bible, shall be the standing rule of interpreting the bible, and ascertaining the sense of it? Hath she not, upon this principle, equal authority to do this, as she hath to establish articles to be assented to, in any other points of religion? Or is there any difference between authorising a comment, and authorising an article, as giving the only true sense of scripture? The former being left, as it ought to be, to liberty of judgement, so that we may either embrace or reject any explication therein, as we shall see reason to do either; would it not be better to leave the latter also, as professing to adjust the sense of scripture, upon the same footing; viz. to be considered as exhibiting only the present sense of the church, on any particular subject or subjects, but not fortified with a sanction, that it shall never be discussed, corrected, or altered upon better evidence? Barring such a sanction, an article may be true, or otherwise (the sanction itself making no alteration in it either way)

way) and therefore ought in reason to be left *in medio*, and may safely be left so, without requiring subscription. Which only ties men down to the sense of others, when they ought to be left free to their own.

To go a little farther in this inquiry. If we suppose the church invested with the authority pleaded for, is she not at liberty to stamp that character upon any other controverted points? Suppose, for instance, she should determine in convocation, and prevail with the legislature to order, That *Calvin's institutions*, or the determinations of the *synod of Dort*, (z) shall be the standard

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(z) Some of our divines, about a century and half ago, would have obtruded upon us the decrees of that synod, as no less binding here, than in the Netherlands: And for what reason? Because king *James* had sent over delegates to that meeting, and they gave their assent to those determinations. Well, but would this conclude the whole church of England, as having given the like assent? Judge from hence. The king, not the church of England, sent over those divines (who, by the way, made several remonstrances against the proceedings of the synod :) This church had no representatives there. And yet the synod had the assurance to make it an order, "That the doctrines contained in their canons, should be looked upon as the doctrines of the reformed churches". See some just reflections on these and the like matters in *Mountague's* appeal to *Cæsar*, p. 70, &c. Of which, more hereafter.



dard doctrine of the church of England? — That the Hebrew points (a) shall be held sacred, or as being of divine authority, and never contested? — That the common printed text of the Hebrew bible, is the only true original text, and never to be doubted? — That the Latin Vulgate, and Greek Septuagint, are authentic and exact translations of that original? — That the present English version is equally so? — With other determinations of this kind. — The supposition being allowed, as it plainly seems to follow, from the authority claimed by the church in such controversial matters; what a check would such determinations be to the learned and useful pains of Dr. Kennicot, Dr. Mills, and others, in retrieving, and presenting to our view, the different and better readings of ancient manuscripts in both the testaments? A prohibition, bearing the stamp of authority, would either totally prevent, or effectually put a stop to, all investigations of this kind, and we should by degrees relapse into our former indolence and ignorance (b).

THESE

(a) See life of Dr. Cotton Mather, Dr. Lightfoot, Buxtorf, &c.

(b) It seems more than probable, that if this great and

THESE strictures may possibly, and not improbably, give offence. But I cannot help it. *Valcat quantum valere possit.* I have only spoken my own mind: And, by the concession of all consistent protestants, I am at liberty to do so. Nor are the animadversions, I apprehend, needless, or out of place.

and arduous enterprise of collating ancient copies of the bible, had been set on foot in the days of the reformation, and prosecuted as it is now, by any number of skilful textuaries, it would have been so far from receiving encouragement, that we should have had an article against it, in some or other of the confessions of those times. — I mention this as a conjecture only. Others, if they please, may dive farther into the matter, drawing their observations from parallel circumstances in other cases. And have not some objected to this glorious attempt of our learned moderns, apprehending that if it should succeed, it would interfere with the terms of our present subscriptions? Suppose it should; must we, for that reason, forbear searching after truth? And if one of the two must give way to the other, pray, Which should that one be?

## SECT

## S E C T. VIII.

*The primary occasion and design of publishing  
declarations of faith in this and other pro-  
testant churches.*

I. **M**R. Brandt, in his celebrated history of the reformation in the Low-countries, speaks of a treatise of this kind bearing the title of, "A confession of the faith generally and unanimously maintained by the believers, dispersed throughout the Low-countries, who desire to live according to the purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ". This was drawn up by the joint application of several learned and pacific divines of those countries. But then we are told, "that none who were concerned in it, ever designed it for a rule of faith to others, but only for a scriptural proof (or evidence) of what they  
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*themselves believed". Book 5. sub. an. 1561.*  
 (c) The historian's remark here is this:  
 "That men should endeavour to turn human positions and doctrines into a rule of faith, is not only too great an inroad upon the holy scriptures, but likewise incompatible with the liberty of prophesying, and shuts the door against further inquiries, that might otherwise tend to the reformation and union of christians". *Annot. on b. 5.* — "If our ideas of divine truths, saith Mr. Herport (speaking of the Helvetic confession) must be modelled according to this confession, to what purpose do we busy ourselves in inquiries after truths? The professors in universities must compose their lectures and explain the holy scriptures, according to this rule; and thus scripture, the

(c) Long before this, even so early as the year 1537, *Luther* declared his sentiments to the same purpose, in favour of liberty. Having laid his articles of concord before the protestant states at Schmalkeld, in the year above-mentioned, "These articles, he said, we are far from issuing out as *strict injunctions* (this would be reviving the popish decretals) but only as a testimony and declaration of *Our* belief", i. e. the belief of himself and his protestant brethren, who joined with him in exhibiting that testimony to the world. — To this declaration Mr. *Herport*, hereafter to be cited, subjoins the following remark; "Never had any such article as this come from *Luther's* pen, could he have foreseen that it would [in after times] be imposed as a rule of faith". *Essay on truths*, (Lond. 1768) p. 176, 177.

the original rule, is degraded and made subject to human positions", &c. *Essay on truths*, Sect. 115. — "Christ doth not say, that his disciples shall be known by the name of any man [or of any body of men,] by embracing [or professing] any particular *confession* or *catechism*, without regard to the holy *scriptures*; much less by any externals, or human inventions, but by *love*. "Hereby shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye *love* one another". Mr. *Brandt's* dedic. of his Hist. of the reformation. If this important distinction had been well considered, and laid thorowly to heart, by those who, at the opening of the reformation, framed confessions, catechisms, articles, &c. they would have been more cautious, and the world would have been less troubled with disputes. They would have judged it sufficient to deliver their *own* sentiments, without obtruding them upon *others*.

2. Of the rise and intent of the articles of our own church, we have this account. In the year 1551, the King and Council gave commission to Archbishop *Cranmer*, "to frame a book of articles for the preserving and maintaining peace and unity of doctrine in this church". This was the first and chief design in view, when this com-

commission was given, and a very good design it certainly was, tending to create and preserve *peace* in the realm. The next year, the archbishop published the book of articles that had been proposed, "to be publicly owned as the *sum* of the doctrine of the church of England, being calculated and intended by him, to create concord and quietness among men, and to put an end to contentions and disputes in matters of religion". Accordingly the archbishop, we are told, expressed his hopes, that if these articles were universally subscribed to by the clergy [an expedient that seems not to have been at first intended] such peace and quietness in religion would soon follow, as otherwise would not be in many years". But the event has turned out otherwise since, nor has the controversy about articles subsided to this day. — However, those articles, being in number 42, were agreed to in the convocation this year (which seemed to be sufficient for one time) and were, in the year following, being the last of K. Edw. VI. published by the King's authority. The archbishop acknowledged, that he laboured to have the clergy subscribe them, but, against their wills, he declared, that he compelled none, (d) only

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(d) We have something similar to this in the life of



only exhorting such as were willing, before they did subscribe". *Strype's memorials of Cranmer*, b. 2. ch. 28, and 34.

3. You may see in the *annals* of this historian, under the year 1559, a declaration drawn up by bishop *Sandys* and other principal men of the church, to remove the common obloquy of the papists against the reformed, representing them as a set of men who were inconsistent with themselves, and had no agreement of doctrines among them. Hereupon they set forth their declaration in the most free, and open, and honest manner, acquainting the world,

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of *Episcopius*, recording the prudent forbearance of that great man towards dissentients, when he could not convince them by arguments. "*Quamvis ab aliis sententiâ discreparet, neminem tamen unquam constringi voluit, ut suæ sententiæ adfentiretur. Quos vi argumentorum convincere non poterat, eorum paratus erat errores fraternè tolerare. Fundamentum hujus tolerantiae erat, quod (sicut omnes statuunt protestantes) omnia quæ unicuique necessaria sunt creditu & factu ad æternam salutem, plenè ac clarè in sacrâ scripturâ contineantur, utpote unicâ ac infallibili regulâ fidei & morum, nobis à Deo & Jesu Christo, solo & supremo legislatore, tradita. Quodcunque itaque nullo modo, vel non clarè, vel non additâ necessitatis notâ, ad consequendam vitam æternam in scripturâ continetur, nemini unquam ut necessarium creditu præscribere conatus est*". p. 326. — See the next note (e).

“that they had been even forced, through the vain bruits of the lying papists, to give up a confession of their faith, in order to exhibit the sum of that doctrine which they professed, and to declare that they dissented not among themselves” (e).

THIS seems to be the most justifiable cause of framing and publishing confessions of faith in protestant churches (f).

#### 4. AND

(e) Difference in opinion & usages breaks not the unity of the general faith of christians and protestants. They are still one body in Christ, and under him their supreme legislator, notwithstanding any diversity in particular modes and sentiments. Our reformation was built upon this principle, and upon this alone can it stand and prosper. “Certainly (saith bishop *Juel*) the general confession of al our people, and of our whole church, is this: *Wee beleue In God: Wee beleue In Christe: Wee beleue In the holy Ghoste*”. Defence of apol. p. 87. This is the grand foundation of our faith: Herein we are all united. “There is but one true faith of all true christians—Our sauiour Christ praieth that his disciples may be one in God and him theyr redeemer. And this vnitye all protestantes retaine, notwithstanding diuersity of opinion in one article, and any contention about ceremonies: euen as the apostles were one, in one God and Christ, although there was variaunce about circumcision and ceremonies”. Dr. *Fulke* against *Bristow*, objecting the discord and inconsistency of protestants, p. 137, 82.

(f) The remonstrants in Holland acted wisely, when finding themselves on some accounts obliged to publish

4. AND as this appears to have been the original and principal intent of ordering

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a declaration of their tenets, they nevertheless required no subscriptions to it. [A. D. 1620,] “in conventu ministrorum, habita deliberatione, decretum tandem est confessionem sive declarationem sententiæ remonstrantium de articulis fidei christianæ scribendam. Mota quidem est difficultas [Scilicet] compertum esse semper, ac in omnibus sæcis ejusmodi confessiones lapsu temporis in regulis fidei mutatas esse, cui adstrictum unumquemque postea voluere, ac juxta quas de puritate & impuritate fidei judicatum est. Sed alii aiebant, contra remonstrantes nullâ re magis remonstrantes populo suspectos invisosque facere conari, quam spargendo eos multas hæreticas doctrinas fovere, ideòque confessionem scribendam esse decretum est: verum ad impediendum quominus posteris temporibus ulli, ut norma fidei, præscriberetur, præfigendam præfationem, quâ verus finis scopusque confessionum, earumque auctoritas exponerentur, ostendereturque eas non esse regulas præscribentes quid quisque credere debeat; sed solummodo declarationes sententiæ ILLORUM, qui confessiones edunt, quam proinde ad verbum Dei explorari oporteret, & quæ neminem ulterius obstringant, quam quatenus cum verbo Dei eas convenire videret”. *Vita S. Episcopii, Amst. 1701. p. 277.* — “If we consult the ancient annals of the church, they who first put forth such symbols, confessions and declarations, had no other design, aim or end, but thereby to testify not what was to be believed, but what THEY THEMSELVES believed: — And certainly, if all declarations and confessions had at all times kept within these bounds, they had not indeed at any time obtained any dictator-like dignity or authority, much less greater than, or equal to, the scriptures in the church”. *Preface to the confession of the remonstrants before-mentioned. Lond. 1676.*



any articles at all to be drawn up, and set forth as the public confession of this church; so it is no less evident from several subsequent declarations, that this continued afterwards to be the chief aim of the civil government in enjoining them. The government intended them principally as the means of *peace*, in regard to differences about religion, among the subjects. It is the office and interest of the civil magistrate, as it is for the benefit of the whole realm, to secure this point; and the ecclesiastical state is subordinate to the civil in this matter. We see what was chiefly intended herein, by the several injunctions that have formerly and more lately been issued out by our sovereigns: and the declaration (tho' now of no validity) which still continues to be prefixed to our articles, leaves us no room to doubt of this. Peace and order are the principal things in view: and the care of these, in the affair of articles, is committed by the temporal powers, to those who have the more immediate oversight of the concerns of the church (g).

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#### 5. ARCH-

(g) It is somewhat remarkable, that divines have generally insisted more upon identity of opinions, than statesmen thought fit to do, who judged other means  
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5. ARCHBISHOP *Whitgift's* declaration, in regard to what are called the Lambeth-articles, of 1595, is well known. "His earnest and hearty desire, he tells us, in setting forth those articles, was, to have the peace of the church generally secured in all places, especially, as he adds, in the university", that had applied to him to interpose in their divisions; where the clashings of some learned men (in  
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more necessary, and more conducive to the public peace. This was particularly the case in *Holland*, where we are told that about the beginning of the reformation, "The laity had more liberal notions of religion than the clergy; many of the latter meaning nothing else by it but an agreement in all points with their teachers or tutors; but the former, a religious worship purged from great abuses, and not too much limited with respect to opinions about disputable points. — The ecclesiastics aimed only at decisions and definitions: The magistrates at peace and mutual forbearance. Those endeavoured to shut up the church by limitations in many doubtful articles: These to set it open as wide as possible, for all christians of unblameable lives". *Brandt's hist. ref.* b. 10. p. 308, 309. — There is in *La Roche's* abridgement of that history (p. 370) a passage that would make one smile. The deputies of *Zeland* coming to the prince of *Orange*, to address him upon the subject of their religious opinions, "Gentlemen, said the prince, I am a soldier: These are theological matters, which I don't understand; and I don't trouble myself about them", No; princes and states have other matters to mind; and divines would do well to mind disputable matters less.

their lectures about some abstruse points which neither side seemed to understand) could, it was then thought, be no other-ways reduced to measures of moderation. One thing was very commendable in the Archbishop on this occasion, shewing his lenity and prudence, in that divided state of the church and university. For he recommended and directed, "that in teaching those propositions, discretion and moderation should be used; — that such as should be in some points differing in judgement, might not be of purpose stung, or justly grieved; — and especially, that no bitterness, contention, or personal reproof, or reproaches, should be used by any towards any; — and that the propositions nevertheless must be so taken and used, as their *private judgement* [viz. the private judgement of the compilers,] *thinking* them to be true, and correspondent to the doctrine professed in the church of England, and established by the laws of the land". Thus modestly and cautiously (says Mr. *Strype*) did the Archbishop advise that they should be held and esteemed. *Life of Whitgift*, b. 4. ch. 17, 18.

6. As here in England, so in protestant churches abroad, the chief care of the temporal governors has been, to secure *peace* in



in the civil and ecclesiastical societies (h). Such peace, it is supposed by many wise and good men, might be obtained *here* in greater measure, by *relaxing* certain terms now enjoined. We see some evidences of this by several good effects that followed the act of toleration: and we have the pleasure to observe, that some of those effects are still improving. And may they always improve and go forward, till we become, by degrees, a spiritual city that shall be at an happy and lasting unity in itself!

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(h) See the public accounts of the present state of the united provinces, and of Prussia, in regard to ecclesiastical regulations; and particularly of those made at Geneva, as set forth by Dr. *Chandler*, Mr. *J. T. Philips*, Mr. *Keate*, and others.

#### E 4      SECT.

## S E C T. IX.

*Objections to requiring assent and subscription to such declarations.—Some remarks on the synod of Dort.*

1. **L**ORD Bacon, above a century and half ago, delivered his thoughts about subscriptions in terms that shew he had no favourable opinion of exacting them. Speaking of the church-governors of his time, — “ Their urging of subscription (he said) to their own articles, is but *laceffere & irritare morbos ecclesiæ*; which otherwise would exercise and spend themselves. He seeketh not unity, but division, who exacteth that in words, which men are content to yield in action. And true it is, there are some which (as I am persuaded) will not easily offend by inconformity, who notwithstanding make  
some

some conscience to subscribe". *Advertisement concerning controversies*. — The case of that worthy person Mr. *Eusebius Paget* (mentioned in *Strype's* life of Archbp. *Whitgift*, b. 4. ch. 7) will in some measure exemplify what the Lord *Bacon* here touches upon; as will also what is recorded by the authors of the first *Admonition to the parliament*, fol. 1. viz. "Immediately after the laste parliament holden at Westminster, begon in June 1570, and ended in anno 1571, the ministers of God's holy word and sacraments were called before her maiesties hygh commissyoners, and enforced to subscribe unto the articles, if they would kepe theyr places and liuyngs; and some for refusyng to subscribe, were vnbrotherly and vncharitably intreated, and from theyr offyces and places remoued" (i).

## 2. THE

(i) Considering the character of our good reformers, and the low estimation in which they generally held the doctors of the *schools*, I should hardly have expected to find any notice taken of those sophists in any of our articles; such men, and their definitions, being really below the notice of such excellent persons. And yet in their 13th article, we see they pay some regard to the distinction made by those frivolous casuists, touching *grace* (or merit) of *congruity*; a term, by the way, not very intelligible to men of plain sense, any more than that other of those schoolmen, concerning *grace* (or



2. THE obscurity and peculiar turn of certain articles, formed upon the model of the old *school-divinity*, and the requiring subscription to them, appeared even to men of rigid principles to deserve a little reconsideration. — Three bishops (*viz. Buckeridge, Howson and Laud*) in an address to the duke of *Buckingham*, 1625, acknowledged, “that some opinions are fit only for the *schools*, and to be left at more *liberty*. And therefore (said they) to make any man subscribe to school-opinions, may justly seem hard in the church of Christ, and

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(or merit) of *condignity*, as they called their figment. Be the sense what it will, the christian religion has no concern with it, and the N. T. may be understood much better without it, and without all other inventions of the *schools*. — Upon a serious review of this article, in which, as far as it can be understood, there seem to be some questionable positions, I am inclined to ask, Is the knowledge of this article, and subscription to it (barring law-injunctions, and temporal considerations) really necessary to qualify a man for *holy orders*? And may not a man be a *faithful dispenser of the word of God*, and an *able minister of the N. T.* without either? — The same query may perhaps be pertinently applied to some other articles. — But, I submit this, as I do every thing I write, to the consideration of better Judges. — Let the purity and simplicity of the gospel be preserved, or, where otherwise modified, restored, I am content. Every man, for Me, may still retain his own opinion. And I may therefore reasonably desire, that no man would lay a restraint (since none has a right to lay any) upon mine.

and was one great fault of the council of Trent". Heylin's life of Laud. Clarendon's hist. &c.

3. BISHOP Taylor well knew what he said, and his reasons for it, when he took the liberty to remind churches, "That no particular church ought with rigour to require *subscriptions to articles*, giving this reason; because (says he) in the division of hearts that is in the world, it is certain that some *good men* may *dissent*, and then either they shall be *afflicted*, or else tempted to *hypocrisy*. Of either of which, if ecclesiastical laws be guilty, they are not for edification: they are neither just, nor pious, and therefore *oblige not*". *Duct. dubit.* l. 3. — See Casaubon's answer to the French king touching matters of conscience, in La Roche's Abr. of Brandt, p. 300. See also, p. 439, the case of *Episcopius*: And of several others, in p. 559.

4. "MANY of these 39 articles (saith bishop Burnet) do relate to *subtle and abstruse* points, (k) in which it is not easy to

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(k) To mark out but one; *original sin*. What is that sin? or how to be described in express words of scripture, and agreeably to the true meaning of scripture, when speaking of the *fall*? For it is a just observation,  
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to form a clear judgement; and much less can it be convenient to *impose* so great a collection of tenets upon a whole church, to *excommunicate* [as in the 5th canon] such as affirm any of them to be erroneous, and to reject those from the service of the church, who cannot assent to every one of them; — it being, in many cases, a great hardship to exclude some very deserving persons from the service of the church, by requiring a subscription to so many particulars, (1) concerning some of

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“ That every point advanced as christian doctrine, ought to be found in scripture, and explained by scripture, strictly regarding the principles there taught, and the established sense of phrases there used”. — With all due deference to the article (which was formed upon some unhappy notions of St. *Austin* and others) it may, I think, be prudent to forbear all harsh constructions, which clash with the attributes of God, and dishonour his sacred revelation. Something of this kind occurs in one of the pieces of the late celebrated Mr. *Hervay*, which doth no credit to our article, and may be thought too rigid a notion for so benevolent and good a man to entertain. Vid. *Theron and Asp.* vol. 1. dial. 5. Our late metropolitan, it is said, hath left some valuable strictures on that treatise. And surely, notwithstanding the great run it has had, and continues to have, among a particular class of men, neither the most considerate nor the most judicious, it may deserve some more masterly animadversions, than have as yet been bestowed upon it.

(1) Dr. *Bennet* in his essay on the 39 articles, hath some



of which they are not fully satisfied".  
*Introd. to exp. 39 articles, p. 1, 6.*

5. AND his lordship's judgement concerning the continuing of these requisitions in the church, is generally well known from the close of the history of his own times; where he delivers his mind with freedom in these words. — "The requiring subscriptions to the 39 articles, is a great imposition. — The greater part of those that serve in the church, subscribe without ever examining them; and others do it because they must do it, tho' they can hardly satisfy their consciences about some things in them. Churches and societies are much better secured by laws, than by subscriptions: It is a more reasonable as well as a more easy method of government".

6. WE may here add this farther remark of this intelligent person, concerning the inefficacy of such forms in general to accomplish the end proposed by them. — "Men whose opinions are so different  
[as

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some remarks relating to the great number of articles to be subscribed, and faith in one place, that many of them are of little moment, and might well be spared.

[as those of different parties generally are,] can never be brought to an agreement in such opinions. And the settling on some equivocal formularies, will never lay the contention that has arisen concerning them". *Pref. to exp. of the articles.* — See below sect. x. 5.

7. WHAT the bishop says about *equivocal formularies*, and their total unavailableness to adjust controversies, and give content to men of different persuasions, will be found abundantly verified by the determinations of the synod of *Dort*; which instead of clearing up the old, created new difficulties, and engaged the different parties in fresh and more numerous contests. Accordingly, the remonstrants complained, "that now they were *worse* satisfied than before; that those points which before were but *private opinions*, and *disputable problems*, and so accounted, are now made *necessary truths*, and *canonized decisions*. And they say farther, [and very truly] that this hath been the prime cause of all *schisms* and ruptures in the church in all ages, viz. That matters of *faith*, and matters of *opinion*, have not been exactly distinguished, but the one (i. e. matters of opinion) obtruded with tyranny upon the conscience, for the other"; viz. for matters of  
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of faith, and fundamentals in religion. And they also asked, as they might with good reason, "Whether we think our first reformers were (like the pope) infallible? Whether it was not possible for them to err? and whether it were not ingenuous to confess and correct a fault, when we are told of it"? Dr. *Chr. Potter's* letter to Mr. *Vicars*, ed. 1651. — Concerning the questions themselves which were debated at that meeting, and about which many learned men varied in their opinions, the worthy doctor makes this farther observation: "Out of all this I collect, for my part, that the points [discussed and decided in that synod] are no necessary *catholic verities*, not *essential* to the faith, but merely matters of *opinion*, problematical, of inferior moment, wherein a man may err, or be ignorant, without danger to his soul". *Ibid.* And surely all wise men in those times allowed, that none of the controverted articles were at all necessary to salvation: And the present age is sufficiently convinced that they had no concern with it.

8. NEVERTHELESS, the synod set about the determination of those articles with the greatest solemnity, as if they had been of the greatest moment; invoking the Deity, appealing to his word, taking an oath



oath to observe it as their only rule, and declaring that their decisions were agreeable to it, and founded upon it. [See the presumptuous motto to their title page.] — The business of the synod being marked out, viz. “to examine and determine the Arminian opinions by the rule of God’s word only”, after a public fast, and prayers, enjoined throughout the Belgic churches, “this venerable synod, we are told, assembled together at *Dort* in the name of the Lord, inflamed with the love of God’s honour and salvation of his church, and upon invocation of God’s holy name bound by *oath*, that they would hold the sacred *scripture* as the *only* rule of their verdict”, &c. *Pref. to the judgement of the synod*, Lond. 1619. And in their *conclusion* they assure the world, “That they hold their determination upon those points to be taken out of *God’s word*” (m). Which they

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(m) *Taken out of God’s word.*] Yet, it is too often seen, that things are said to be taken out of God’s word, which never were in it. Numberless instances of this kind might be produced. We have seen catechisms, we have seen confessions of faith, we have seen other little systems of divinity, replete with scripture-proofs, as they have been called, but far from deserving that title. The 21st article of the church of England makes this just remark, speaking of general councils :  
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they all confirmed by their *subscription*, and  
the states ratified by their *approbation*, ac-  
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“ Things ordained by them as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared, that they be taken out of holy *scripture*”. (Much less what may be ordained and so declared by inferior assemblies.) The article must certainly mean, — what may *with truth* be declared and affirmed to be taken out of holy scripture, and agreeable to the general tenor and genuine sense of that sacred code. Otherwise, merely declaring and averring, that the points asserted are taken out of that repository, is *gratis dictum*, and may well stand for nothing. Most confessions are of this stamp; and one would be tempted to say of them, as lord *Digby* said of the *fathers*, “ As for such opinions as they deliver *dogmatically*, without alledging texts of scripture or learned arguments to maintain them; although they appear delivered with never so earnest an intent that they should be taken as matters of faith, you must pardon me if they sink no deeper into my belief, than they are driven by such arguments as my own or others discourse can find for them, either in reason or scripture”. *Letters*, p. 116. However, the superintendents at *Dort*, to do them justice, have sometimes given us *scripture* in support of their allegations, tho’ at other times they have favoured us only with their bare assertions, expecting, I suppose, assent and submission without farther inquiry. Shall I produce an instance of the former sort? “ *God, before the foundation of the world hath chosen in Christ unto salvation a set number of certain men, neither better nor more worthy than others; — that is, God willed, that Christ should effectually redeem all them, and them only, who from eternity were elected unto salvation, that he should bestow faith on them*”, &c. chap. 1, 2. What proofs from scripture for these  
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knowledging that the whole had been adjusted "by the rule of *God's Word only*".

### 9. Now

assertions? The words of scripture are set forth at large with "As it is written, *Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. and Rom. viii. 30*". But with what propriety of application, let men skilled in the true sense of these passages, judge: As also concerning the solidity and evidence of the following declarations, "*God bringeth to pass this his own good pleasure in the elect, when he worketh true conversion in them, and powerfully enlighteneth their minds by the holy Ghost, that they may understand aright, and judge of the things of the spirit of God. Also by the efficacy of the same regenerating spirit, he pierceth into the most inward parts of man; whose heart being close shut up, he openeth it, being hard he softeneth it, being uncircumcised he circumciseth it; and as for the will, he infuseth new qualities into it, and maketh it of a dead heart lively, of an evil good, of a nilling willing, of a stubborn buxom*", &c. ch. 3, 4.

Now, applying to divines of the church of England, let me only ask, How would you relish such matters? Should you like to *subscribe* to the foregoing declarations, taking those texts of scripture produced in their favour (as many novices are said to do those in *Welchman* and others) for sufficient confirmations from scripture of the points asserted? — And yet, we are well assured, that repeated endeavours have been used formerly (tho' very happily, without success) to get some similar, or stronger declarations inserted into the articles of the church of England. See *Playfere's* app. evangel. p. 11, 14. What continual shiftings, distinctions and subtleties, should we then have had? volumes upon volumes, refinements upon refinements, clashing of opinions, and strife of pens without end,



9. Now altho' men of true discernment, and well versed in the scriptures, can plainly see that these assertions fall short of proof, and, that the doctrines settled by this synod are in many instances disagreeable to the word of God, and inconsistent with its design; yet those doctrines must pass for indisputable truths, and be passively submitted to without any contradiction. — But it is pleasant to observe how these reverend divines, tho' they assumed so much authority over mens judgement and consciences in these controverted points, and had themselves in their decrees visibly perverted the sense of scripture, as well as deviated from its words, and rule, (whatever they may have been pleased to say to the contrary) yet, addressing themselves in the close of their work, to all their fellow ministers of the gospel, they exhort them “to frame not only their *judgement*, but also their style of speech, to the square of the *scriptures*, and to forbear all such *phrases*, or manner of speech, as pass the bounds set out to us, of the *right meaning* of the holy *scriptures*”: Which seems to be little better, than bidding a man walk after you have fettered him, or advising him to look up to the sun, and be guided by its light, when you have hoodwinked him. Let the scripture still be the rule

of your faith, and the great object of your studies and inquiries, tho' we have pre-determined the *sense* of it for you; and from our interpretations you shall not vary.

10. WHAT followed after the order of the states, prohibiting all deviations from the doctrines established by the synod, is too well known. *Subscriptions* were strictly required of all who would either enter into the ministry, or were already in it, or possessed any place or dignity either in the church or in the universities; and those who refused subscribing, were without more ado rejected, discharged, and sent packing with their families to seek their bread in desolate places. The consequence was, that many excellent men, the most ingenious, the most learned, and the most exemplary in their lives, were rendered useless to the public; some had their goods seized; some were imprisoned; some exiled; others reduced to extreme poverty, and a starving condition. A hard case surely, and for ever to be lamented by all wise and good men, who love humanity, and are averse to impositions upon conscience. Such impositions generally follow, wherever human authority assumes the place of the divine, erecting itself into

into a tribunal to determine in matters of faith.

11. THE canons settled by this synod were no fewer than ninety-three, — upon five articles only. The form of *subscription* required to them, may be seen in *La Roche's* abridgement (An. 1619) p. 527, 528; and the form of *oath* enjoined the year following by the synod of *Alais*, in confirmation of the canons of *Dort*, is exhibited in p. 629 (n). Both unbecoming the christian

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(n) "I N. do swear and promise before God, and this holy assembly, that I receive, approve and embrace the *whole* doctrine taught and decided by the national synod of *Dort*, as being perfectly agreeable to the word of God, &c. So God help me, and be merciful to me, as I swear before him what I have now said, without any equivocation, evasion, or mental reservation". — The spirited remonstrance of Mr. *Herport* (a late worthy divine in Switzerland) against such oaths and impositions does naturally recur to memory on this occasion. And the hardships which he suffered, even unto death, on the account of that book, is a fresh and glaring evidence, that bigotry with its dire attendants, has not even yet totally deserted that country. — It may concern protestants to consider, how nearly they approach the Romish church, tho' with their backs towards it, when they enjoin oaths any way relating to topics of religion. Every body knows (but does every body consider?) that the ecclesiastics of that hierarchy, are all *sworne* to observe and maintain all the received doctrines, discipline and rites of



profession, and greatly detrimental to its interest.

12. WHAT apology can be made for those high rants of some noted members of the synod, who set the decisions of it upon an equal footing with the word of God? — *Ritfus Lucas*, one of the deputies of Embden, exhorted the states not to suffer the confession of faith, and the catechism, both authorised by the synod, to be ill spoken of; *because*, said he, *it is the same thing as if one should oppose the prophets, or Christ and his apostles.* Abr. p. 522. — *Nicolas Lachterop*, a worthy minister of Kampen, offering to subscribe the canons of the synod with this restriction (*as far as they agreed with the word of God*) was told by the examining class, that he must subscribe them, *as being the word of God.* Upon his saying, your demand is unreasonable, he was asked with disdain, “Whether he pretended to be more knowing than so many learned personages, who had made those decrees?” A striking argument, still common, and still powerful. What can humble modesty reply to it? and

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of that imperious church. — Doth the *christian religion* enjoin any such juraments? And may it not be far better promoted without them?

and who, but a man of spirit, would not be silenced by it? — In the conclusion, poor *Lachterop*, refusing to subscribe, was deposed and banished; his wife and six children turned out of his house, and his goods laid in the streets. p. 567, 568.

13. **SYNODS** and councils have usually been looked upon with a high degree of veneration and reverence, and it has been commonly supposed, that such bodies of men, assembling in God's name, are favoured with his presence, and assisted by his spirit, in their consultations about religion. No ecclesiastical council was more famous than that of *Nice* (An. 325.) Its determinations were considered as divine. The emperor Constantine speaks of it in terms of the highest reverence: "What three hundred bishops (assembled in that council) have agreed upon, [*but, by the way, did they all so agree, without any variation in sentiment?*] ought not to be otherwise taken, than as the decree of God almighty, especially seeing the *holy Ghost* did reside upon the minds of such and so excellent men, and opened his divine will to them." *Socr. l. 1. c. 6.* The synod of *Dort*, you may be sure, was not unwilling to be considered in the same light, and to be accordingly complimented. Nor were they dis-

appointed herein. *Bogerman* the president, after having thanked *Polyander* (the Leyden professor) for his sermon before the synod, said, He did not doubt but the synod was *directed by the Spirit of God*, (o) especially by reason of many learned and

(o) N. B. The same *Bogerman* declared also, the next year, at the synod of *Lewarden* (which had rejected the constitutions of the synod of *Dort* touching church-government) that he doubted not but the holy Spirit was present in that assembly also of *Lewarden*. From whence, says *La Roche*, it appears, that *Bogerman* discovered the presence of the holy Spirit, not only in those synods that were favourable to him, but in those also with which he was displeased. *Abr.* p. 572. See another specimen of *Bogerman's* presumption in this way, in p. 491, complimenting *Diodati*, as having spoken in the synod by divine inspiration. — The compliment paid by the English parliament to the compilers of our liturgy, on account of their unanimity in drawing it up, is generally well known, and might probably occasion the much higher strains of compliment bestowed upon it afterwards by some of our zealous eulogists. What a strong expression was that of *Dr. Swadlin*, in his anniversary sermon on the 30th of Jan. 1656? "There is not a tittle of the book of Common Prayer, but what hath been dictated by the holy Ghost". Which is carrying the matter rather too high. It is well the doctor speaks here only his own sense, and that he could not command the assent of others. — Now supposing subscription had been required to this assertion? — Another query occurs: If, as hath been asserted by a superior verdict, the common prayer was composed by the aid of divine inspiration, May we not, by parity of rea-



and pious *sermons* lately preached in it; adding, that he wondered the visible marks of

reason, suppose, that the *articles* were so too? and also the *homilies*? — *Cranmer*, and others like-minded in those times, had more modest thoughts of their performances in each kind. And surely that great and good man would not have passed that most fulsome compliment upon any man, which his successor *Whitgift* afterwards did upon *James I.* at the Hampton-court-conference, viz. that he verily believed his majesty spake by the inspiration of the holy Ghost.

As to the authority of ecclesiastical conventions in prescribing articles of belief; the ready disputant and casuist *Dr. Featly* appears to have looked upon it as sacred, and submission to it as a piece of respect due to the church; whose pastors met in synod have power to determine concerning points of doctrine. "It appertains to the office of the *pastors* of the church, especially met at a *synod* for that end, to teach the people of God, what they ought to receive and believe. — "But it is demanded, With what kind of *faith*, human or divine, are such articles to be received? I answer, At the first propounding of them, if we have nothing to say against them, they are to be received by a *human* faith, or the faith of the church, out of reverence to our mother the church: But after we have examined them, and compared them with scriptures, then by a *divine* faith". *Second speech before the assembly of divines, 1643.* — What effects *synods* may have towards illuminating mens understandings, and altering their opinions from what they were before their admission into them, I am not able to say: but it was observed of this doctor, who had expressed so high regard for *synods*, that after he became a member of this Westminster-synod, he shewed himself to have more of *Calvin* in

of God's presence in that assembly had not convinced the remonstrants that they [Q. who?] might expect a happy success from it. — Would you know what the remonstrants said in answer to this? "It was more surprising, they observed, that they should never have been invited to the sermons of the synod, since those fine discourses were a proof of the assistance of the *holy Spirit*". p. 431, 432.

14. SHALL we now question the judgement, or the impartiality, of the states general, when, in their *approbation* of the transactions of this assembly, they said, "This great and holy work was such as the reformed churches never saw before"? After such an encomium, from such high and mighty personages, will it be pardonable to subjoin, *And may they never see such work again?* how highly soever extolled by its admirers. — One of whom, and not the least conspicuous, nor the least revered in the assembly, was Dr. *Martin Gregory*, counsellor of the dutchy of Gel-

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in him than before. — Was this synod or assembly, *divinely inspired*, or was it not? If *inspired*, how can you account for this conduct of *Featly*? or what will you think of *Calvin* — If *not inspired*, how came *other synods* to be esteemed so, and accordingly revered?

Gelderland, who, being president of the commissioners, made a solemn prayer in the synod, in the hearing of a great concourse of people, giving thanks to God for the happy success of the said synod. Nor did he scruple to pronounce farther, "That the work of the synod was certainly *miraculous*, and made hell tremble." p. 521. An. 1619.

15. It is fit, after all, that we should know the true character of this synod, as described by men of greater impartiality, and less addicted to flattery and compliment. — It has been observed, that the business of this assembly was carried on, from first to last, with so much heat and hurry, and such overbearing insolence of the stronger party towards the weaker, that the latter had just reason to complain as they did, "that they had not been fairly used in that convention; that it was not truth but victory that was sought for; that their professed enemies were their judges; that the scriptures and reasons were not thorowly examined, nor were their consciences convinced; and that, upon the whole, they were indeed condemned, but not confuted" (p). — So that we cannot wonder

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(p) Dr. Potter's letter. But tho' they were condemned



der at their declaring as they did, "That a free synod was a chimerical thing, which never had existed, and never would exist".

(q) And *Martinius*, one of the best and most moderate of the synodists, did not scruple to own, "That he now believed what *Greg. Nazianzen* said, viz. that he had never seen any council which had a happy success, but rather increased the evil, instead of removing it"; (r) declaring

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demned without confutation, yet, as *La Roche* remarks, they triumphed over their adversaries in point of reason and argument; and to this hour those masterly strokes of their pens stand unrepelled, and their reasonings unrefuted.

(q) *Abr.* p. 420.

(r) Nor have our own synods sometimes acted much better, or more to their credit. Sir *Tho. More* long ago, observing the political schemes and factions of our convocations, styled them *confederacies*. And more lately bishop *Burnet*, who had seen too much of their caprice and humour on repeated occasions, said with his usual freedom, "I confess I am not inclined to expect much from the assemblies of clergymen. I have seen nothing in church-history to incline me to depart from *Greg. Nazianzen's* opinion of those assemblies. What has happened among ourselves of late, has not made me of another mind". *Introd. to the third vol.* of his *Hist. of the reform.* 1714. The clause in our 21st article ("for as much as they be an assembly of men", &c.) is too often verified, more or less, in all such assemblies, the smaller as well as the larger. And why should

at the same time, that he wished he had never seen *Dort*; and that he would never again set his foot in any synod. He said also very freely to a remonstrant divine, "The synod is a mere farce or comedy, in which the *politicians* act the main part. Which being also observed by our *Hales* of Eton (who constantly attended) made him compare the synod to a clock, the chief springs whereof are hid". *Abr.* p. 505, 565.

16. SUCH were the proceedings of the famous synod of *Dort*; "One of the most needless and most insignificant synods (as *La Roche* takes notice) that ever met; a synod called only to please angry divines". A synod, as *Martinius* also averred, "in which were some things diabolical, others divine, others human". And lastly, a synod upon which *Barlaeus* (vice-regent of the college of divinity at Leyden) made this severe but just reflection; "The *holy Spirit* did not preside in that synod, but *Bogerman*, a man full of gall and bitterness, who  
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should we (ordinarily) expect more from ecclesiastical than we do from civil conventions? We never say that parliaments are inspired, tho' parliaments have some times thought ecclesiastical committees to be so.

maintained that heretics ought to be put to death". *Ibid.* p. 530, 471, 547 (s).

## 17. WHEN

(s) The members of this synod were in all, as I compute, 87. The five deputies from king James are each of them styled *priests*, except *Carleton*, whose title in the list is, *bishop of Landaff*. None of the rest (the 82 *Hollanders*) have the denomination of *priests*. Among other titles of distinction assigned them, we have the following; which may be some amusement to the curious.

“ Chief professor of *sound philosophy* in the university of M. and dean there. [Q. What would be thought of that *sound philosophy* in these days? and how is it approved now in Holland?] — “ Preacher of the *court*, and professor of the college of *gentry* at Cassels. — “ *Pastor* of God’s church in the city of Dort. — “ *Elder* of the church of Dort. — “ *Minister* of Dort, and deputy of the *orthodox* synod of Utrecht. — “ *Pastor* of the church of H. now deputed by the *orthodox* church of C. — “ *Counsailler* of the town of Z. and *Elder* of the church there. — “ Professor of the *N. Testament* in the university of Basil, and dean of the faculty of divinity there. — “ Dr. of divinity, the *servant of Jesus Christ*, at the parish of the virgin Mary, in the church of B. and professor of the *N. Testament* in the school there. — “ Dr. of divinity, *minister* of S. M.’s parish in the church of B. and in the famous school there, professor of the *Old Testament*, and practical philosophy. — “ *Servant of Jesh. Christ crucified* in the church of S. — “ *Holy bailiff* of S. H. *elder* of the church of D. — “ *Elder* of the churches in B. H. and H. [three places or districts.] — “ *Minister* of the church of W: and *overseer* of the adjoining churches. — “ *Minister* of the church of M. and *superintendent* of the neighbour churches. — “ Coun-



17. WHEN we seriously reflect upon the proceedings of this synod, and the several particulars that have been produced in the account of it, we may well draw the following inferences, or lessons of useful instruction and improvement to christians of all denominations.

(1) THAT the christian religion (after all the controversies about it) doth "chiefly consist in the practice of the commandments of God; that all doctrines not contrary to them, may be maintained on both sides; that subtle questions, which do not promote the salvation of those who understand them well, nor hinder the salvation of those who are wholly ignorant of them, should be buried in oblivion; and that it is to be wished that christianity was freed from useless disputes, and restored to its primitive simplicity". *Ibid.* p. 605, 606. These were the candid sentiments of the remonstrants, and must be owned to be just and weighty, as well as peaceable.

(2.) THAT

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"Counsailler of the states of Friesland, *Grist-man* [great-man] of E. D".

The full history of this synod, and many curious particulars relating to it, may be seen at large in *Brandt's* 4th volume, beginning at the year 1619.

(2) THAT it is a great part of christian wisdom and moderation, to exercise forbearance in regard to different sentiments, and to acquiesce, as far as we fairly can, in established determinations. — When *Uytendogart* took his leave of his tutor *Charles Perrot*, minister and professor at Geneva, that good man advised him thus. “When you are called to the ministry, never condemn those who do not agree with the church about every article of religion, whilst they acknowledge the fundamental points of christianity, and are disposed to maintain the peace of the church. For (said he) this is the right way to avoid *schisms*, and establish *unity* and *tranquillity* among christians”. *Ibid.* p. 305. — *Dr. Pelling* speaks with the same good spirit, and to the same good purpose, “When men are not legislators for others, but judges for themselves only; when points are knotty and disputable, and hard to be clearly determined; and when opinions are harmless enough, especially while they lodge in the minds of peaceable and modest men; we should express our charity to each other by allowing every one the liberty of his own private judgement, without denying those of a different persuasion from us, either our communion, or our affection.”

affections. "Tis unreasonable to make opinions arguments to set up strait a separate party, and to use them as the men of Gilead did the word *shibboleth*, for a note of discrimination between a friend and an enemy". *Disc. on charity*. p. 263, 264.

(3) That we should think it sufficient to adjust our own sentiments in the best manner we can, and upon the best foundation; and when others, who are dogmatical, perverse and censorious, cannot agree with us, e'en to let them alone to enjoy their opinions as they list; it being the business of the magistrates to see that they demean themselves peaceably in such their enjoyment. I own I am not a little pleased with those resolutions of Mr. Mountague (afterwards bishop) which he expressed in regard to mens different opinions, and his being content with his own, permitting to others the freedom of theirs. Speaking of the synod of *Dort*, and the English delegates there, "I see no reason, he said, why any of those worthy divines of our church there present, should take any offence at my dissenting, (who had no authority that I know of, to conclude me;) more than I do at them, for differing from me in their judgements. *Quisque abundet in sensu suo*". Appel. Cæf. (1625) p. 70.—His opponents,



it seems, would have obtruded upon him the determinations of that synod, as authoritative in certain points of theological dispute here. "The synod of Dort, saith he in answer, is not my rule. If the synod of Dort hath determined otherwise [than my judgment can yield to] let their determinations stand, for Me: I quarrel them not; I meddle not with them. Those that like the decrees of that synod, or are bound to maintain the decrees of that synod; let them maintain them if they like them: *Non equidem invideo*. I have no part nor portion in them". p. 107, 108. — Again: "The rule of your consciences is not the square of mine; nor shall be, except it were more regular, perfect, and exact than it is. Enjoy your opinions to yourselves; let me enjoy mine, in things indifferent, that are not prohibited by lawful authority any way". p. 272. — And as for *opinions*, upon which many lay so great a stress, "For my part, I desire not to contest with any man about them; nor would I willingly have mens minds, or the peace of the church disquieted with them". And having said this, He subjoins his remark, which is too frequently verified in practice, "That it is an evil disease in the world among divines, In things of indifferency they cannot endure dissentients; [saying, whether with more per-

perverseness or folly, I leave others to judge.  
 “ I will hold no correspondency with him  
 that will not *per omnia* and *in omnibus* be of  
 my mind”. p. 169.

(+) Lastly, That in all concerns of religion (which demands our best attention, and most active application) we should exercise and improve our *judgement* in the best manner we are able, and never resign it with an implicit deference to any human authority, or to the good opinion we may entertain of any particular person or persons, of how great name soever in the learned world. — Councils, synods and convocations have sometimes erred. So have individuals, of the greatest abilities, and most approved integrity. — Dr. Potter, before quoted, had long observed the common *indolence* of students in this respect, and makes these just reflections upon it. —  
 “ It is a very easy way which many walk, and if it were as safe, I would be content to walk it with them; Blind-folded they follow their leaders, and sparing their own eyes, they presume their guides (so learned, so holy) see clearly enough. Therefore they believe all their dictates, as if they were divinely inspired, and spake oracles, without *examining*; which eases them of much

trouble and difficulty in sifting and judging. For my part, I ever thought it a thing unworthy of a *christian* (and yet more of a *minister*) and full of danger, to invalidate his understanding to any man, or any men; or to embrace and espouse opinions in religion, without judgement, out of phantasy and prejudice, because they are recommended by some great names, which we have in admiration". *Letter to Vicars*—To these judicious observations, deserving great regard, we may pertinently add those of the ingenious Mr. *Marvel*, recommending freedom of inquiry, in opposition to slavish acquiescence in other mens judgment. "Every man, says he, is bound to *work out his own salvation with fear and trembling*, and therefore to use all helps possible for his best satisfaction, hearing, conferring, reading, praying for the assistance of God's spirit; but when he hath done this, he is his own expositor, his own council, &c. — The *Bereans* are enobled by patent in the A&S, because they would not credit *Paul* himself (whose writings now make so great a part of the N. T.) until they had *searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so, and therefore many of them believed*.—Shall *christians* take their belief upon *trust*, as written in tables of stone, like the commandments



ments delivered from heaven? — No; a good christian will not, cannot assign and indenture his conscience over, to be either represented [or dictated to] by others".

*Historical essay, p. 34, &c.*

**P 3 S E C T.**

## S E C T. X.

*Difficulties and inconveniences attending such demands.*

**A**MONG other ill effects arising from the strictness of these and the like requisitions in our ecclesiastical establishment, we may reckon the following.

I. DIVIDING communions, and causing mutual dislike and shyness between fellow-protestants. (1) "Few churches (as bishop *Taylor* observes) that have framed bodies of confession and articles, will endure any person that is not of the same confession : which is a plain demonstration that such bodies of confession and articles, do much hurt, by becoming instruments of separating and dividing communions, and making unnecessary or uncertain propositions

sitions a certain means of *schism* and disunion". And he presently adds, what well deserves to be noted, in regard to impositions occasioning *schism*, "Men would do well to consider, whether or no such proceedings do not derive the guilt of *schism* upon them who *least think it*; and whether of the two is the schismatic, he that makes unnecessary, and supposing the state of things) inconvenient impositions, or he that disobeys them, because he cannot, without doing violence to his conscience, believe them". *Lib. of proph. sect. 22.* Vid. *Hales's* tr. on *schism*, and Abp. *Land's* definition of it. In short, the worst *schism* is contention, and a dividing spirit; as the worst heresy, is a bad life (t).

P. 4. (2) D8.

(t) "Thou abhorrest the Socinians and other heretics, because by their opinions they deny Christ to be God. But Thou, by thy unworthy actions, dost also deny his godhead"; *M. Burgess, ser. 59.* And it seems that in the times of this preacher, as well as in those of *St. Austin*, that truly heretical opinion too much prevailed (and are there no remains of it still?) That if a man believed *orthodoxy*, he might live *wickedly*. — On the other hand, if a man's belief is *unorthodox*, or varies ever so little from the common standard of *orthodoxy*, be his life and morals ever so good, he shall have bad names given him, and an odium fasten'd upon him. "Such an one, said a calvinist preaching against a remonstrant, is a pious man, and lives an exemplary life; but he is a schismatic, and bath a devil".

Abr.



(2) Dr. Hammond takes notice, and he had but too much ground for his observation, that "hating and damning one another is most ordinarily for *opinions*". And he is confident, that if we would all keep ourselves within such moderation, as to purpose no larger catalogue of *credenda* to be believed by all, than the apostles-creed as explained in our catechism, insisting upon *practice* more than *opinion*, (u) there

Abt. of Brandt's hist. p. 451. Which puts me in mind of what a heathen magistrate said of one of the primitive christians, *Caius Sejus vir bonus, at christianus*. — "My name is *Christian*, said one of the ancients, and my surname is *Catholic*". And that is enough. — It was an inviolable maxim with Dr. Doddridge, "Never to condemn his brethren as having forfeited all title to the name of *christians*, because their *creeds* or *confessions of faith* did not come up to the standard of his own. — No *mistake*, he thought, could be *fatal*, which does not greatly affect mens *temper* towards God and each other". *Life*, p. 195, 196. — And that was a most laudable resolution of the emperor *Jovian*, that he would not molest any man, whatever *creed* he followed, but would cherish and honour those above others, who should shew themselves most forward in bringing the church to a good agreement. *Socr.* 1. 3. c. 21.

(u) *Opinions* divide the world, and fill it with nonsense instead of sense, with vice instead of virtue. Abp. Laud was justly grieved, that in his time *opinions* began to supplant *practice*, that the substance of religion

there would be less hating and damning, more piety and charity, and more true christianity among christians and protestants, than hitherto hath been met with" *View of Directory, sect. 40.*

(3) "I fear it will be found, that too many who profess to have reformed from the church of Rome, still retain too much of the spirit of it; and too often make their own systems and notions, the measure of their affections; and confine their cordial love and christian charity, within the bounds of their own creed, or manner of worship". *Bp. Hoadly, vol. 1. serm. 2.*

(4) AND it is well if we do not, in these and other like respects, sometimes fall under that censure of another writer, viz. "Human determinations and appointments may possibly be well meant, but they are in-

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was changed into opinions and mere notions, and the whole of it, made to centre therein. We too well know and lament what followed; and the effects of it are visible to this day. Wisely therefore doth Dr. Hammond recommend practice (as all wise and good men always do and will) above opinions; the one being durable and useful, the other often vain, uncertain, unsteady, pragmatical, pernicious; destructive to religion, and the public peace; destructive to mens everlasting welfare.

injurious to the gospel. They produce stupidity instead of truth, souness and superstition, instead of candor, piety and humanity". *Seagrave*, observations.

II. INVADING the right, and precluding the exercise, of private judgement; and thereby occasioning an imputation upon the church, of exacting implicit submission to her dictates.

MR. *Welchman* indeed will have it, that the church disapproves of implicit faith; (w) and, what is very reasonable that none ought to subscribe the articles, who have not studied them (x). — But here some things

(w) *Implicitam fidem ab ecclesiâ Anglicanâ improbari.*  
Ad. lect. pref.

(x) *Articulis hisce te operam dare oportet, nisi iis subscribere quæ parum intelligis libeat, quod ingenui non est animi.* Ibid. — Bp. *Barlow* clenches the matter farther, and points out more work for subscribers than they seem to be generally aware of. "Every divine of the church of England is bound to *subscribe* and *defend* the doctrine and discipline of our church against all adversaries; and none can do that, before they *know* and *understand* what that doctrine and discipline is". *Directions for study*, p. 45. That they ought to *know* and *understand* before they can do either, is unquestionable. But, that subscription necessarily implies defence, or engaging in controversy, or, that every subscriber



things occur which would incline us to hesitate a little upon the matter; As,

(1) THAT one or more of our learned universities require minors to subscribe before admission (y). In which case it cannot well be supposed that they have studied the articles beforehand, and particularly, (to give but one instance out of many) that they sufficiently know what they affirm concerning the several churches mentioned and condemned in the 19th article.

(2) THAT it is was the generally received tenet of the fathers of this church for a long time after the reformation, and never

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is, in virtue of his subscription, or for that only reason, obliged at all adventures to defend, repel, and contest with adversaries, may be justly doubted. This observation of the bishop seems to favour pretty much of the turn and humour of those times wherein he lived; when it was usual to instil such principles into the minds of young men preparing for orders: And the effects were answerable, as we see by the writings, and know from the history, of too many; which have done more harm than good to religion and the civil government. Better train up such young persons to peace and piety, than to dispute and controversy. The church and state would receive more benefit from such a conduct.

(y) *Si supra duodecimum ætatis annum extiterint, articulis fidei & religionis subscribent. Stat. univ. Ox.*

never censured by her. "That her authority in matters of faith, is a power vested in her governors to determine what shall be received and professed for truth among her members, and to bind them to submission to the sentence of those governors, altho' that sentence should in the event be *erroneous* (2). And this was the opinion of of bishop *Sparrow*, in his preface to the collection of our canons". *Nelson's rights of the clergy*, p. 65.

(3) THAT subscription to the articles hath long ago been determined by all the judges of England, in the court of King's-bench, to be *absolute*, and required by the statute to be so: And the great oracle of the law, the lord chief justice *Coke* affirms, (*Instit. part 4. ch. 74. p. 323, 324,*) "that the clergy are to subscribe absolutely, without any glosses or senses of their own". — By the way, if they are to have no senses of their own, In what, or in whose sense, if in any, are they to subscribe? If in the sense of the church, What is that sense, and how can they be sure of it? If, as many are

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(2) Q. Is this much short of that claim of the church of *Rome* asserted by Dr. *Stapleton*, viz. "We must simply believe the church, whether it teach true or false. *Antidote on Luke x. 16.*

are said to do, you subscribe to her sense at all adventures, without inquiring, let her sense be what it will; your faith in her decisions is then implicit, and you settle ultimately in the *fides carbonaria*; (a) at the same time making your subscription to be a mere *opus operatum*, and consequently good for nothing.

III. A third disagreeable circumstance attending these regulations and orders, is, that unbelievers, and others who bear no good will to the clergy, take occasion from hence to reproach and vilify them. How severe (I inquire not at present how just) the following reflections upon that order of men, on this occasion! "The clergy are at length caught in their own toils; they have shackled themselves, (b) they can-

(a) "I believe as the church believeth, and the church believeth as I do". This was the short creed of the poor ignorant collier,

(b) These and the like reproaches will always remain, whilst the cause remaineth. "Swallow what ye have brewed" (*Avaliez ce que vous avez brassé*), and *much good may d'ye*, you are rightly served, will always be uppermost with many, as a sarcasm upon the clergy in the present case, till they are honourably discharged from these restraints. Many serious and sensible persons among the laity, think the clergy should not be indis-

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cannot refuse, if they will undertake the office ; nor defend it when they have done. — What can the laity think, but that these persons, who with so much ease and quietness solemnly profess propositions to be true, which they are convinced are false, (merely for the sake of the preferment of the church) would, for the sake of greater gain, subscribe to any other thirty-nine propositions you can give them? — 'Tis certain that he who begins with a lie, may be sent by the father of lies ; but he cannot be thought to enter in by the door, who prevaricates in the first word that he says, in order to his admittance". *Dissuasive from entering into holy orders, in a letter to a young gentleman*, 3d ed. 1738.

2. NOR are these and the like reflections made by adversaries only, but are in effect allowed to be just, even by some of the clergy themselves. "Our articles, say they, are articles of doctrine ; and therefore every declaration of *unfeigned assent and consent* to them, strictly implies a belief of

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ferent to these matters. And can they be so, whilst they observe these and other obloquies of the like kind so frequently cast upon their order, and they at the same time so well know what are the causes, and how they may be removed?

of them; and to subscribe them upon any other footing is prevarication, and inconsistent with real honesty; unless it shall be said, and can be proved, "that a man may solemnly declare that he believes, what he does not believe, and yet be an honest man". See the several *answers to the essay on spirit*, and the tracts upon the subject of *subscription*, &c.

IV. ANOTHER unhappy consequence of such institutions is, that they frequently occasion *scruples* and embarrassment of conscience to thoughtful and worthy persons, in regard to entrance into the ministry, or continuance in the exercise of it.

I. NOT to mention the case of the late Dr. *Hartley* of Bath, which is pretty well known, nor that of divers other valuable men, who might have done good service and credit to our church in the sacred office; I will just take notice of one, whose merit is allowed by all, but whom nevertheless these tests had like to have kept for ever from engaging in that office: And that was the pious and learned bishop *Bradford*: Of whom Mr. *Masters* tells us, that being a young man, and of age for orders, he had some scruples of conscience in regard to the solemn subscriptions, declarations,

tions, and oaths, that were by law required for degrees (in the university of Cambridge) and especially for orders. He therefore left college without taking any degree, nor did he enter into orders till about the 38th year of his age, the intermediate time from his leaving college being spent in the study of physic, tho' divinity was more agreeable to his inclination. *Hist. of C. C. C.* (1) 184, 185.

2. WHOEVER has read the life of the famous Mr. *John Hales* of Eton, hath seen enough to convince him of the evils of impositions, and invading the sacred rights of conscience. Archbp. *Laud* had done all that lay in his power to satisfy him about certain matters of conformity, tho', as it seems, without the desired effect. Mr. *Hales* in his letter to his grace some time after, writes very affectingly upon the subject of conscience. "In matters relating to God and a good conscience, it concerns every man sincerely to know the truth of his own heart, and so accordingly to determine of his ways, whatsoever the judgement of his superiors be, or whatsoever event befall him. For since, in case of conscience, many times there is a necessity to fall either into the hands of men, or into the hands of God; of these two, whether is the best, I leave every particular man to judge.



judge. Only I will add, thus much: It is a fearful thing to trifle with conscience: For most assuredly, according to It, a man shall stand or fall at the last.

3. WHAT uneasiness of mind, and perplexities of conscience, the affair of subscription created to the good *Bernard Gilpin*, and afterwards to *W. Chillingworth*, you may see set forth at large in their respective lives.

4. THESE restraints laid upon christian liberty, in whatever church or churches they are found, have been the object of concern and grief to wise and considerate men of all denominations. Dr. *Doddridge* was particularly affected with the thoughts of them; "greatly lamenting, as we are informed, those unhappy terms of admission into the ministry, in the churches both of England and Scotland, which exposed men to the danger of prevarication and falshood, or led them to such quieting expedients, as he could not but fear sat uneasy on their consciences. He thought these were fetters, under the weight and straitness of which, however they may be gilded over, the worthiest persons that wear them, must secretly groan."

5. NOR did he think with less concern

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of such abridgements of liberty in other christian societies. He observed with sorrow, that these tests of opinions and of consciences, bore too great a head even among protestant dissenters, altho' so evidently contrary to their own principles: Whose interest, he reminded them, had received great damage by unscriptural impositions, and uncharitable contentions with each other. And more particularly he thought it not only unjust in itself, but very injurious to the interest of religion, to be rigorous with young ministers and students about their particular sentiments, and to tie them down to profess their assent to formularies [for instance the *Westminster-confession*] (c) containing points of

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(c) See "Reasons against the imposition of subscription to the *Westminster-confession*, or any such tests of orthodoxy; with answers to the arguments for such impositions. By S. Haliday: printed at Dublin. — The *catechism* also drawn up by the same assembly, and bearing the sanction of their name, carries too much the air of imposition, as well as of crude doctrine in some points. Dr. Priestley intimates, that it has "acquired that degree of superstitious reverence, which sets it upon a level with the *scriptures*". Which is a pity. *Pref. to catech.* 1767. — The following censure upon this and the like productions of that assembly, will be found, upon accurate examination, to be but too well grounded, viz. "I think the *confession of faith*, and

of a very abstruse or a very doubtful nature. He thought it also highly imprudent in the

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and the *larger* and *shorter catechisms*, contain much that appears unworthy of, and a reproach to God, and, that very many of the *texts* of scripture, brought to confirm positions there laid down, are foreign to the design for which they are quoted. Vid. *Parvish's* critical examination (1751) p. 6. Also the *address to protestant dissenters*, 1746. And Mr. Ph. Gibbs's letter to them, 1737. "Calvinism, Sirs (to speak my mind of it to you freely and briefly) is a very wrong and bad scheme; from whence all who embrace it, will necessarily suffer, as I and you have done in several respects: And indeed (excepting popery) I know not of any thing that has more defaced the beauty of christian religion, or has a greater tendency to defeat its blessed designs." p. 31. — The curious will be abundantly convinced of this, if they shall think fit to look into Dr. *Waller's* sufferings of the clergy, part 1. p. 175. &c. where they will see a particular and very odd account of the examination of Dr. *Sadler* by the trying commissioners of *Westminster*, formed in great measure upon Mr. *Calvin's* theology; which account is taken from *Sadler's* *inquisitio Anglicana*, 1654, being a long list of "mongrel questions, as another calls them, which some of the propounders themselves understood not". How is the noble simplicity and plainness of the christian religion there debased, perplexed, obscured, and turned into low quibbles, unintelligible jargon, and even exquisite nonsense! Many of the little books of those doleful times, are also full of such grimy pictures, and distorted features, of the best religion under heaven. These were the times in which, as Dr. *Featly* informs us, it was common to see stuck up on doors, posts, and walls, such advertisements as these; On such a day, such a brewer's clerk exerciseth; such a taylor expoundeth; such a waterman teacheth, &c. *Dippers* dipt. pref. 1645.



imposers, to enjoin and insist upon such profession; as being likely to prejudice such young persons against those points, and drive them into the opposite, and perhaps worse extreme". See *his life by Mr. Orton*, p. 136, 195, &c.

6. THE reflections of Mr. *Abernetby* upon the subject of subscriptions, carry great weight with them, and are very affecting.—"To make professions against the light of my own conscience, seems to me a most heinous impiety: In the mean time, there is not any thing I am more in danger of, than the secret influence of corrupt motives, especially an undue love of reputation, fear of reproach, and the disesteem of men; who, I am sensible, act from an intemperate and ill-informed zeal for what they think truth: This puts on the disguise of prudent caution and care to preserve my usefulness in the ministry; but let me always remember, that my usefulness, and the reputation necessary to it, is to be committed to God, and resigned to him, never to be preserved by any sinful compliances on my part.—Shall I ever dare to trifle or prevaricate in religious professions? Shall I be intimidated in doing my duty to God, and in maintaining the rights of conscience, by an expressive regard to the

the opinions of men"? &c. *Pref. to his sermons on various subjects*, p. 71, &c.

I could add many more such reflections, but these may suffice. Serious minds will duly consider, and properly apply them.

v. AFTER all, the end at first proposed by these impositions, is not in fact attained, nor is ever likely to be.

i. THE first design of the articles was expressly this : *To avoid diversities of opinions, and to establish consent touching true religion.* But time and experience have shewn, that this is impossible. We see at this day, that men are divided in their opinions about the sense of those articles; (d) some tak-  
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(d) *Divided in their opinions about the sense of these articles.* If this be the case, as it certainly is, Of what use or service can *subscriptions* be? Dr. Tindal took a handle from hence to point out their insignificance, nor did he speak without reason. "If, said he, men of *opposite* sentiments can subscribe the *same* articles, they are as much at liberty as if there were none, [no articles to be subscribed.] The late bishop *Stillingfleet* affirms, that a man may be very right in the *belief* of an article, tho' mistaken in the *explication* of it. Which, saith *Tindal*, with proper acuteness, is supposing it sufficient for men to agree in *sounds*, tho' they ever so much differ about the *meaning* of them". *Pref. to rights of the chr. ch.*

ing them in the calvinistical, others in the arminian sense, and many or most (of whom I could produce a large catalogue) considering them only as articles of peace. — New sects have arisen, and these are tenacious to the last, of the narrow and exploded sentiments of Mr. Calvin: Who, as Dr. Covel observes, was in a manner idolized by his followers, (e) at least they reve-

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(e) "Of what account *Peter Lombard* was in the church of Rome, of the same and more amongst the preachers of the reformed churches *maister Calvin* was; and they only were judged the perfectest divines, which were skillfullest in *Calvin's* writings, which were almost reputed the very canon for controversies to be judged by; insomuch that at last it was [reckoned] wholly unlawful in any thing to dissent from him, and his praise in the end was not many steps short of idolatry". *Defence of Mr. Hooker's eccl. pol.* 1603. — "*Calvin* (said the learned *Casaubon*) was a great man, but his followers make things worse. There is certainly a pharisaism among them. *Goulart* (a minister at Geneva) was for obliging the people to swear that they approved of *Calvin's institutions*". *Abr. of Brandt's hist.* p. 303. Q. How unreasonable was this proposal? how extravagant? Was it any thing short of popish exactions? to which *Calvin* nevertheless, barring too much rigour in imposing, was so staunch an adversary. The church of Rome obliges all her ecclesiastics, regular and secular, to swear that they will never expound scripture otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the fathers. A thing impossible, and requiring endless drudgery. Even protestants sometimes tread in the steps of antichrist. *Idem monachus, licet alio cucullo.* — Concern-



revered him in theology, as *Aristotle* (f), had been in philosophy. — Bp. Bull says, that matters were come to that pass by degrees, with the old church of England calvinists, as he calls them, “that it was hardly safe for any one to interpret either the articles of our church, or even the scriptures themselves, otherwise than according to the standard of *Calvin's* institutions”, (*Apol. sect. xi.*) — And it is well known that the articles which were of the calvinistical stamp in the days of

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cerning popish impositions upon the clergy and laity, more particularly those of the Trent-faction, see a very valuable treatise of a most worthy gentleman, Sir John Thorold, intitled, *A view of popery*; 1766.

(f) *Aristoteles cum occidenti innotescere cepisset, tantæ amplexus admirationi fuit, ut post aliquot annos, author & ite publicæ cantum est. Nequis Aristoteli contradiceret. Aldrich, art. log. compend. Oxon. 1696. præf. — “The schoolmen embraced his philosophy with a greedy and implicit faith, supposing it the very gospel of all philosophic knowledge, and therefore set themselves to mix and blend it with the doctrines of the christian schools, and by its rules and maxims to explain all the articles of the christian faith”, Bp. Parker's reasons for abrog. the test. p. 16. 4to. — From the year 1220 to the year 1330, Aristotle was introduced into the very sanctuary, and his writings valued and regarded above the scriptures. In hoc intervallo Aristoteles in ipsâ adytis sacrarii theologiae introductus, & scriptarum demonstratione niti censetur:*

Archbishop *Abbot*, wore the arminian features in those of his successor. So great, so sudden was the change in the course of a short time; and our universities accommodated themselves to the temperament of those who had successively the ascendent in those matters (g). — Had *Arminius* arose, and displayed his sentiments (however rational) to the world, soon after the compiling and publishing of these articles; Would he not have been at once rejected, and perhaps also condemned for an heretic, or a setter-forth of strange doctrines, by our leading reformers?

2. So

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*Quæ autem verbum Dei docet, credulitate & opinione [tantum] probabili teneri. Quod etiam expresse & publicè fatentur & asserunt scholasticorum doctissimi. Bp. Barlotw; directions for study, &c. p. 38. Next to Aristotle, this set of men ranked the Fathers: The former they set above the scriptures; the latter they only made equal to them.*

(g) *Lambeth*, it was said, gave the sense to our articles, either way. Calvinism was at first all in all: *Doctrina à Calvino tradita nihil continet catholicæ veritati, aut fidei regulæ, contrarium*, was the common assertion maintained in the divinity-schools: In after-times otherwise; that same calvinism, which a little before was *orthodoxy*, being now reputed but little short of *heresy*. Dr. *Edwards* says, that bishop *Laud* preferred none of that persuasion, and some fellows of colleges who preached on that side, were expelled by his procurement. *Verit. redux*, p. 552.

2. So that upon the whole, we see that these tests, which were by them designed to be the means of union, have proved, and continue to be, the fuel of division. — It may perhaps concern our governors, in order to put an end to these contentions, to moderate, or take away, the occasion of them. The times call for some better and more durable measures of securing peace and unity, as well as truth.

## SECT.



**SECRET. XL**

*Means of removing the grounds of dissatisfaction about such matters.*

I. **T**HE *scripture* to be left at large in its native purity and simplicity; and the free study of it to be encouraged.

I. PROPOSE to the several sects and parties of protestants, to fix upon some one of the several systems or confessions (received in their respective churches) which they shall all agree to profess and adhere to, as the general standard of their belief as protestants; your proposal will have no effect. — Propose to them to acknowledge the *scripture* only to be that standard, and they will all agree.—The inference is obvious.

2. THAT

2. THAT the scripture alone is sufficient for such purposes, we have already seen under former heads. (*Vid. sect. 1. and vi.*) Let us now attend to some other notices which may bring the matter more home to the present point.

3. " SOME by religion mean their own additional doctrines, not to be found in the gospel. — who make their own additions to the gospel to be of equal importance and authority with the gospel itself; who bind upon men heavy burthens of their own contriving; who enlarge the faith once delivered to the saints, or contract the charity absolutely enjoined to christians. — *Our church* (which was reformed from popery, not upon the bottom of infallibility, but upon that of appealing to Christ himself in his gospel) professeth, that the scriptures are the rule to all christians; and that nothing can be lawfully required of them to believe or practise, as peculiar to their religion, but what is in Them plainly enjoined. If any therefore of the professed members of *this church*, have gone farther; either pretending to powers which the gospel gives them not; or imposing *systems* of religion, about which the gospel is not express; either enforcing doubtful things, as certain;

tain; or matters not made necessary by Christ, as of necessity to eternal salvation; it is plain, the main and general principle by which the church itself desires and declares, that all ought to be conducted, both by no means bear them out, but indeed condemns and disapproves them". *Bp. Hoadly, vol. 1. (1754) serm. 10.*

4. AGAIN: In the 16th century, "a great body of the christian world broke loose from the power of this monster [the infallibility claimed by the church of Rome:] And in order to this, they had no other way, but to declare for the New Testament itself, as the only guide, or rule of faith; the only deliverer of this faith to us of later ages. And this is the very rule I have now laid down, [viz. that we must find out what that faith was, which was at first actually and completely delivered to christians :] But when this rule comes to be put in *practice*, too many of the same persons, who have set it up as the only guide, turn round on a sudden, and let us know that they mean by it, not those original writings themselves, (h) but the  
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(h) It is a well known remark, and a true one, of a great



interpretations, or *sense*, put upon them by our spiritual superiors; to which we are sometimes said to be obliged, and bound in duty to submit; and sometimes are allowed a liberty of examination; but in effect put under an obligation to find That to be truth, which is taught by these leaders". *Vol. 2. (1755) serm. 2.*

5. MR. *Hales* of Eton had long before made the same observation which the bishop here does, in regard to the tergiversation of protestants, or their departure from the first great principle of their reformation, and their *inconsistency* with that principle in their subsequent regulations. — "If, in place of the glosses of the church of *Rome*, we set up our *own* glosses (to supply what the plain text of scripture cannot yield) thus to do were nothing else, but to pull down Baal, and set up an Ephod; to run round, and meet the church of *Rome* again in the same point, in which at first we left her". *serm. at Oxford 1617.*

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great churchman, "That we do indeed, in *words*, preserve all authority to the *scripture*; but with great dexterity we substitute, in *fact*, our *own* explanations, and doctrines drawn from those explanations, instead of

*concerning abuses of difficult places of scripture, &c.*

6. And bishop Kennet had plainly the same thoughts of the matter. — “It has been, saith he, a common effect of human infirmities for men to be assuming those powers to *themselves*, which they denied and refused in *others*. Upon this weakness, some of the reformed churches, or rather some of the warmer members of them, when they had justly renounced the absolute authority of the church of *Rome*, and had sufficiently declaimed against her spirit of persecution, were no sooner settled, but they began to think themselves invested with some such full authority to ordain decrees, and to have a right of compelling all within their pale, to submit their faith and obedience to them”, &c. *Appendix to the bishop's life*, p. 264.

7. THE same judicious Mr. *Hales* speaks again to good purpose, when he would reduce us to the *scriptures* only, and those to be left in their full *latitude*. — “The literal, plain and uncontroversible meaning of *scripture*, without any addition or supply by way of *interpretation*, is that alone, which for ground of faith, we are necessarily bound to accept. — Many times, under

der pretence of some inconvenience, we hinder *scripture* from that latitude of sense, of which it is naturally capable". — In places of doubtful meaning, he thinks it sufficient for us to use that moderation of Austin, *Neutram partem affirmantes, nec destruentes, sed tantummodo ab audaci affirmandi præsumptione revocantis*. Lastly, he observes, "It is not depth of knowledge, not knowledge of antiquity, nor sharpness of wit, nor authority of councils, nor the name of the church, can settle the restless conceits, that possess the minds of many christians. Only to ground for faith, on the plain and uncontroversible text of *scripture*; and, for the rest, to expect and pray for the coming of our Elias: This shall compose our waverings, and give final rest unto our souls". *Serm. above cited*.

8. A very learned and ingenious author, who has long and accurately studied the sacred writings, and formed very large and generous sentiments of them, sees reason enough to wish, that the study of them were more cultivated, and more encouraged; and exhorts us to pursue that study with greater ardor and alacrity. — "Let us be intent on studying the pure word of God; and careful to interpret it in such a manner, as may do most honour to its



author; and at all times encourage a free and an impartial *study* of it. 'Tis now high time to do this, and to awake out of sleep, since our reformation is much nearer than when we first believed; and it is to be wished, — that we were disposed to help forward, rather than check the progress of every serious inquiry, and stop any farther improvements in the knowledge of that which of all things deserves and wants them most; rather than withstand a general reformation in religion, by rigorously insisting on, and obtruding *such* things for *doctrine*, as are the commandments of men, and very foreign to the essence of it". Dr. Law, now bishop of Carlisle; *considerations on the theory of religion*. p. 196, &c. 5th edit. — And the same worthy person, upon good ground, tells us farther: "I am far from imagining that *christianity* is yet come to its mature state; that it is understood in the whole extent, or held in its utmost purity and perfection, by any particular church. — We must surely be sensible, that the *scriptures* are very far from being thorowly understood by us, who are of so reformed a church; live under such an excellent government; and in this enlightened age. — We are still apt to confine the gospel of our Lord, as his primitive disciples some time did, to particular nations, churches, sects, opi-  
nions;

nions; to contend vehemently, either about things in their own nature abstruse and difficult to be understood, and therefore less necessary to be determined; or else such lighter matters, as the ceremonies, circumstances, and outward forms of its administration; instead of explaining and recommending the true nature, end, and design of it; of being intent upon enlarging its real kingdom", &c. p. 181, 182.

To THOSE who would see the arguments in favour of the free and impartial study of the sacred scriptures set in the strongest light, may look into the celebrated performance (said to be written by a learned bishop of this church) intitled, *The difficulties and discouragements which attend the study of the scriptures in the way of private judgement; in order to show, That since such a study of the scriptures is man's indispensable duty, it concerns all christian societies to remove (as much as possible) those discouragements.* — If those arguments are valid (and impartial judgement alone can determine whether they are so or not) it is certain, that the obstacles which lie in the way of such a study as is pleaded for ought to be removed; and the sooner the better, to prevent christianity from running into ruin, and making room (as it seems to do from time to time) for the two ex-

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trems of *superstition* and *infidelity*. — See *Hallet's* free and impartial study of the holy scriptures recommended. A valuable performance, deserving notice.

11. *Scholastic* and *systematic* theology to be laid aside, as being generally prejudicial to the attainment of true scripture-knowledge.

I. THE former of these, minced out of the aristotelian philosophy, converted the plainest religion in the world into the nicest subtleties; spinning divinity into cobwebs, and making depths and mysteries where there were really none. Our first reformers rejected the schoolmen; and why should we regard them? — “I make no foundation at all (said our first protestant bishop) upon the arguments of the *scholastic* writers, but my very foundation is only upon *God's word*; which foundation is so sure, that it will never fail.” *Cranmer's* ans. to *Gardiner*, p. 305. — Dr. *Whitacre*, the famous professor at Cambridge, had a mean opinion of school-divinity, and speaks of it with just contempt, as not only trifling and perplexing, but also highly injurious to the christian doctrine. *Sophisticis argutis plena est scholasticorum theologia.* — *Quàm indignum est*



accedit theologia quod illi ubique faciunt, dum  
 antroverfas causasque theologiae ex Aristotele,  
 Avicenna, Alexandro, & philosophis, quos  
 firmiter? Illa vero innumerabilis quaestiones  
 et captiones, quos sui spectant, nisi ut veram  
 theologiam sepiant, atque errores multiplicet,  
 miseramque ignorantiam patiant? Responsi  
 ad 10 rationem Campioni, l. 9. p. 853. Lond.  
 1583. And bishop Davenant rightly judg-  
 ed, that the incumbring religion with  
 school-lumber, did it great disservice, and  
 stopped its progress: He is for discarding  
 all such additions; — Neque omnino opus  
 est ut talibus addicamentis prae gravemus publi-  
 cas ecclesiarum confessiones. — Quorsum igitur  
 disceptationes & verborum pugnae? Quid fa-  
 ciunt in confessionibus ecclesiarum, subtilitates  
 scholasticorum? De pace inter evangelicos  
 procuranda, p. 35.

2. He who considers the sum of chris-  
 tian doctrine, as it now ordinarily stands  
 in the church, and compares it with the  
 faith once delivered to the saints, will scarcely  
 forbear censuring the school-doctors to have  
 been worse enemies to christianity, than  
 either the heathen philosophers, or per-  
 secuting emperors. [An extraordinary ob-  
 servation indeed; tho' most unhappily, but  
 too just.] Bp. Wettenhall; suit for forbear-  
 ance. And another observation of his, be-

fore cited, is no less true, and the thoughts of it are equally grievous, viz. That "the evil introduced into the church by these unlucky wits (as he calls them) the *school-men*, having affected the very *vitals* of our christianity, is likely to stick not only closer, but longer to the church, than any other darts that have wounded it" (i).

### 3. THEN

(i) See in Lord Bacon's essay on superstition, what was said to the disparagement of this set of men, with their eccentrics, epicycles, &c. at the council of Trent; tho' their doctrine bore great sway there, and their axioms and theorems were considered as the principal means of justifying almost every corrupt practice of the Romish church. — So much the less likely then to serve the interest of the church of England. And if any protestants still retain the definitions of the schools in their formularies and confessions, they are certainly in an error, which it would be more to their credit to relinquish than retain.

*A sort of error, to ensconce  
Absurdity and ignorance :  
That renders all the avenues  
To truth impervious and abstruse,  
By making plain things, in debate,  
By art, perplex and intricate.  
For nothing goes for sense or light,  
That will not with old rules jump right :  
As if rules were not, in the schools,  
Deriv'd from truth, but truth from rules.  
A pagan, heathenish invention,  
And good for nothing, but contention.*

Hudibr.

3. THEN with regard to *systems* in divinity; they have done infinite detriment to christianity. For whereas this has left many things at large and at full liberty, not confining them within any narrow boundaries, those have contracted and cramped them, and intirely suppressed that liberty, wherewith Christ had originally made his disciples free in such matters.

4. THUS for instance; they have pre-occupied mens judgements, and precluded the entrance of truth into their minds; in-  
somuch that when they come to the reading of the holy *scripture*, they come with their prejudices about them, not to learn the true sense of scripture (for they are not at liberty to do this) but to confirm themselves the more strongly in the sense of their several *systems*; (k) which in course divides

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(k) What Dr. Edwards, quoted by the author of the *Considerations* before mentioned, says of the writings of the ancient fathers of the church, may perhaps with equal pertinency be applied to the writings of the modern fathers of *systems*. Let us try how his words will found, being transferred to these latter. "We should have understood the *scriptures* much better, if we had not had the writings of [some or many of our systematical divines:] for they have obscured and depraved them by their different and contrary comments: they have raised controversies; they have taught men



the christian world into so many different parties; whereas otherwise, as a judicious per-

quarrel and dispute about the *sense* of many texts, which otherwise are obvious; and about several matters of practice, which are evident enough in themselves; some of which are superstitious", &c. *Consil.* p. 164.

As to the *fathers* themselves, *Episcopus* had a right notion of them, and their writings. "Non videbat jactatam eam utilitatem in *patrum* scriptis. — Re verà, nemine excepto, cuncti erraverunt. Tam accurate *scripturam* eos non explicuisse, ex eorum scriptis apparet, quàm alios multos, qui serius vixere". *Vit. Episcop.* p. 324. — Several of our reformers paid little regard to the fathers; and we pay them less. Dr. *Humfrey*, who wrote the life of Bp. *Juel*, acknowledged that *Juel* gave the papists too large a scope, when not content to have beaten them with the authority of the holy *scriptures*, he made his challenge upon the testimony of the *fathers*, and that, so many hundred years after Christ". The observation was but too just, as the lengthening out the controversy between him and *Harding*, &c. plainly shewed; which otherwise might have been cut very short. — "It had been sufficient, saith Dr. *Fulke* on the occasion, to have layed against you, [papists] "Your doctrine is contrary to the *scriptures*. — As for *fathers*, councilles, traditions, churches-authoritie, we affirme or deny, as they agree or disagree with the truth of the holie *scriptures*, the onely certaine witnesse of the will of God revealed unto men". Again: "We [protestants] acknowledge no *fathers*, unto whose judgement we will stande absolutely in all controversies, but the prophetes, and the apostles, and God himselfe". *Re- spective against* Briskow, p. 55, 137, 53. And even Bp. *Juel* seems to have thought better afterwards, when, citing S. *Austin*, he declares, "I owe my consente with-  
out

person remarks, "If men come to the word of God to fetch their religious opinions from *thence*, and do not, for the governing the sense of scriptures, bring their *opinions* with them thither; this, with an honest and good heart, will help men to understand the truth of God, and the truths of religion". Dr. *Jeffery*, disc. on 2 Tim. iii. — These truths of religion, the great lines of christianity, are so visible, so intelligible, that any man of common understanding, having but an honest heart, desirous to know and practise the will of God, and using his best endeavours, with humble and daily prayer, to this end; may with ease and pleasure discern the true intent of this divine religion, and will be convinced of its truth and excellence. Great learning and parts (tho' both of

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outgainfainge, not vnto the doctours or *fathers*, but Onely vnto the canonical *scriptures*". Defence of apol. p. 63. — Lord *Digby* in his letters to Sir *Kenelm*, hath many pertinent remarks on the *fathers*, and their conduct in controversy. See particularly, p. 76, 77.

It cannot but grieve men of judgement, to see the unhappy pains that have been taken by the late well-meaning Mr. *Wogan*, in allegorising the scriptures after the manner of the *fathers*. His comments on the proper lessons, abound with such misapplications, and may in time be attended with very ill effects.

them highly commendable and useful) are not necessary for this purpose. Erasmus was clearly of this mind. *Doctos esse vix paucis contingit: at nulli non licet esse christianum; nulli non licet esse pium. Addam audacter illud, nulli non licet esse theologum. Adbort. ad christianæ philosophiæ studium.* His contemporary bishop Latimer, in his conference with his fellow-prisoner, bishop Ridley, hath a blunt and free remark, in his usual way, to the same effect; having in his eye the popish monopolists. "A man that is studious, well willing, and often calling upon God in continuall prayer, who geueth his holy spirit to them that desyre it of him, — such a one, though he be a *layman*, fearing God, is much more fyt to vnderstande holy scripture", &c. p. 18. ed. 1574. — *Layman*: Vid. Marvell's remark in *Hist. Essay*, p. 38. 4to.

5. Dr. Burton's observations deserve regard. "Institutione quidem evangelicâ [ab ipso Christo atque ejus apostolis primitus evulgatâ,] nihil erat apertius, nihil simplicius, sanctiusve; adeoque, si quando religio christiana novam *systematis* cujusdam artificiosi formam induisse videatur, hoc, non tam Dei consilio, quam hominum ingenio & solertiæ est tribuendum. — Commentatores quidam, cum opiniones domi pre-judicatas



judicatas attulerint, ad scripturas explicandas ita accedunt, ut judicia sua non ad sacri scriptoris mentem componant, sed ut illius verba quoquo modo in partes suas invita trahant, et ad *systematis* sui defensionem detorta accommodent, illiusque autoritate prætensa, se suaque omnia tueantur atque commendent". — All which is very true, and too often discerned in such writers. And therefore our learned doctor justly laments, "Proh quam difficile est opiniones præconceptas usque diuturno confirmatas, animo protinus evellere, & quod labore magno didicimus, id ipsum ultro nescire!" *De fundamentis*, p. 19, 48, 34 (1).

6. W

(1) Few men comparatively are able or willing to shake off the prejudices of education and system. "T. Bradbury was noted for inflexible bigotry to the last; being bent, as the writer of his character says, upon the fast retention of his education-principles, and excessively fond of himself on that account; which made him imperious and dogmatical in his diction, and treat his opponents with sovereign contempt". — How different from this man was the late excellent Dr. *Duchal*, whose writings are so well esteemed by discerning and unprejudiced men of different denominations! "One thing, says the essayist upon his character, adds much to his praise; that tho' his mind was early preoccupied by the high *systematic* theology, then in fashion, yet he had the strength of mind to emancipate himself from all human authority in matters of religion; and perhaps nothing more obstinately ad-

6. We may note that *systems* have too often clapped a bias, unawares, even upon the best understandings, and the most disinterested minds. Who can observe, without concern, the specimens of this kind to be seen in some of the letters of those two great and learned divines, Archbishop *Usher*, and his correspondent Dr. *Ward*, professor of divinity in Cambridge? The former in his systematical account of the death and satisfaction of Christ, (letter 22, 23 :) and the latter in his abstruse arguments on the subject of infant-baptism, writing to bishop *Bedell*, who seems to have understood the subject better. *Lett.* 162, 163. at the end of *Usher's* life by *Parr*.

## 7. I

adheres, than the first infusions of this sort". *Letter* prefixed to the 2d vol. of *Duchal's* sermons, 1764.

The following question proposed by this worthy doctor, well deserves our notice. "How obstinately do men continue in errors, the most glaring and absurd, and of which the least degree of impartial consideration might convince them, only because they have been so taught to believe, and to account it a dangerous thing to believe otherwise". — And can any intelligent and serious friend to christianity read what follows without a very sensible concern, knowing the observation to be too true? viz. "Certainly nothing in the superstitions of the heathens, could be more absurd, than some opinions which are received, and contended for, by some denominations of christians". *Vol. 1. serm. 6.*

7. I presume we may rank under this head, the learned *Hooker's* distinction concerning two wills in God, merely to save a system at a pinch; with many more such inventions of lettered divines to serve a turn, and support the credit of a tottering system.

8. AND what an unhappy dilemma are such of them brought to, as happen, upon free and fair examination, to be convinced that any of their former tenets which they had learned from their respective systems, are wrong, and ought to be relinquished! — Shall they afterward continue to profess as truth, what they are persuaded is an error? or will they resolve at all adventures to weather out the consequences? obloquy, jealousy, dislike, alienation of friendship, impairing of temporal interest, &c. — We have many instances of such conviction, upon the discovery of better evidence; as in the case of bishop *Sanderfon*, bishop *Barlow*, dean *Pierce*, and others; who, upon the veil being taken off, relinquished the predestinarian hypothesis, and embraced better notions. But how long a time had they spent in the study of system, and probably in the preaching of it? And what must they now do? (m)

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(m) “As to renouncing a prejudice of education,  
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9. You see the incommodiouſneſs of ſystems, in this reſpect at leaſt. To which I will add this other obſervation, *viz.* that ſuch inſolures are, for the moſt part, the never-failing ſource of bigotry, conceitedneſs, uncharitableneſs, and ſometimes of very odd and perverſe humours. — To

give  
it cannot need any defence or apology with conſidering men. A man thinks and ſtudies to little purpoſe, if, after a fullneſs of age and judgement, he does not examine the matters that are before him more critically than he did when he was many years younger. — Errors and miſtakes the wiſeſt of us all are ſubject to; and it would be well for the world, and for men themſelves, if they would be true to their own convictions, and be ſo honeſt as to own their miſtakes, when they have diſcovered them”. *Life of Bp. Kennet*, p. 44. *Ibid.* p. 46, and 247. — “A man may be allowed to change his opinion at any time, upon good reaſons; and of length of days, no multitudes, nor authority of men ought to preſcribe againſt the truth”. *J. Hales* (of Eton) ſerm. before the univ. of Oxf. 1605, p. 45. 4to. See alſo, *life of Chillingworth* by *Des-Maizeaux*, p. 23, — 29, well worth noting; as is alſo the conduct of the learned *Drusus*, a man remarkable for ingenuity and love of truth, wherever he found it. His manner was to ſuſpend his judgement, when a proof did not appear to him ſufficiently ſtrong; not being aſhamed to alter his opinion, when he was convinced of the contrary by good reaſons, even in his old age, and in thoſe matters which he had ſtudied all his life time. Theſe, as *Mr. La Roche* obſerves, are two of the beſt qualifications a man of letters can have: They may be looked upon as certain ſigns of *great ſenſe*, and of an *honeſt heart*”. *Abr. of Brant's hiſt.* p. 342.

give but one or two instances which now occur

10. THE pious and benevolent Mr. Brand (as Dr. Annesly tells us in his life) once gave *Wade's* treatise of the redemption of time to a young minister; who at first received it kindly; but when he began to read it, finding Mr. Baxter quoted in it, he hastily returned it, not enduring to read any thing that Mr. Baxter had written (n). Such the force of prejudice in favour of narrow systems, of whatever kind!

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(n) And yet a far more competent judge, one who well knew Mr. Baxter and his writings, had a very different opinion of both, and deserving more regard. Bp. *Walkins* said of him, "That he had cultivated every subject he handled, and, if he had lived in the primitive times, would have been one of the fathers of the church". And at another time he said, "That it was enough for one age to produce one such person as Mr. Baxter". — Account of his life by Dr. *Bates*. — It is the less to be wondered at, that narrow-minded men should be prejudiced against Mr. Baxter, since he was of so different a principle (as well as spirit) from theirs, his principle being catholicism, and theirs bigotry. No one knew better than himself the wide difference between these two, and their contrary views and interests. Thus he speaks: "The interest of christianity, catholicism and charity, is contrary to the interest of *sects* as such: And it is the nature of a *sectary*, that he preferreth the interest of his *opinion*, *sect* or party, before the interest of christianity, catholicism

11. ANOTHER instance, is this. When some learned men undertook to translate Dr. Doddridge's family-expositor into German, an opposition was made to its publication by some of the Lutheran clergy, from an apprehension that his interpretation of particular passages, and his reflections upon them, might not agree with their established principles of church-government. *Life of Dr. Doddridge by Mr. Orton*, p. 145.

12. So that in these and the like instances, if in any, we see that observation of Dr. Sam. Parker too plainly verified, when he says (in the pref. to his eccl. polity) that "the minds of bigots are as contracted as their herds, and all that are not within the fold of their church, are without the sphere of their charity". — The same, I presume, may be also said of religious tests, that they are generally erected on a narrow bottom, and, like sieves, suffer only bodies of such a particular make

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licism and charity, and will sacrifice the latter to the service of the former". His *life*, 1696, fol. lib. 1. part 2. p. 144. — Narrow-minded persons, of whatever denomination in religion, may draw from hence an useful lesson to abate their prejudice, and enlarge their charity.



make and dimension to pass through; in-  
 somuch that many times some of the best  
 men, and the best qualified to promote  
 religion, are by these tests debarred en-  
 trance into that scene of action; and some of  
 the worst, who never trouble their heads  
 about such matters, pass through at once  
 with ease, and enter at least upon the fruits  
 of the vineyard. — This way of measur-  
 ing mens opinions by a line, and circum-  
 scribing them within certain limits, ap-  
 pears to me in much the same light as that  
 arbitrary proceeding of former times in  
 respect of the *press*, when no books would  
 be licenced, but such as would pass scru-  
 tiny in reference to the ruling politics in  
 church or state: And sometimes, if they  
 were not agreeable to the particular hu-  
 mour, interest, or prejudice of the licen-  
 cer, they would be rejected. That en-  
 croachment upon liberty, with regard to  
 the press, being removed, Why should  
 encroachments of much the same kind,  
 in regard to religious opinions and free  
 inquiry, be permitted to continue? Should  
 not both those restraints, being alike in-  
 jurious to liberty, civil and religious, have  
 been removed together? Or would you  
 with the former fort restored, after so  
 many clear and cogent reasons for abolish-  
 ing

ing it in a free nation? — See *Milton's*  
*areopagitica*.

13. One thing more is particularly observable in the strenuous assertors of *System*; that when any part of it is examined and shaken, being found incapable of sustaining the force of argument, they conclude at once that all is undone, the whole of religion demolished, as inseparably incorporated with their *system*, and not capable of subsisting without it. What tragical outcries were raised by this set of men against Mr. Bull, when he published his *harmonia apostolica*? They cried out, as if by his hypothesis, “the whole substance of the body of divinity should undergo an intolerable change, — the whole system of orthodox divinity shaken, yea broken to pieces, and utterly destroyed; and that the very foundations both of law and gospel were hereby at once undermined and overturned”. *His life by Mr. Nelson*, p. 166, 172.

We have nevertheless seen otherwise, and do daily see that these good men were mistaken. But amazing is the stiffness of many in their conceits, and their jealousies and suspicions are endless. They suspect there is poison in every word, and  
heresy

heresy in every proposition. Some are of opinion, not only that they are in possession of the truth, but even that they alone possess her; yea, that all others are obliged to submit to what they call the truth. — They who in some communities will not depart one tittle from what their ministers [or any other dictators in matters of faith] have once conceived and taught them, whether it be true or false. Do they not in some manner make their teachers their gods, by paying them too great honours? But nobody will own that this happens in *His party*. — The peace of the church might easily be attained, if we were what we ought to be, that is, ready to part with our opinion for a better, or at least, if we did but practice *mutual toleration*: *Ger. Brandt's* dedic. of his *Hist. of the Church*. *THE* foundation should be large and nothing admitted that may have a tendency either to make men narrow-minded, or to intrench upon their religious or civil liberty. The foundation being made large and solid, dissensions will drop in course, or will be found to be comparatively so few and small, as to be scarce worth notice in a land of liberty, where the principles of christian toleration are approved and settled, and where the laws



of the civil state are wise and good. See Locke's *letters on toleration*, &c.

2. For my part, I am persuaded, that a variety of sentiments in religion, while moderation and mutual charity are maintained, can do no hurt, nor will that variety create any confusion. — The wise and good *Camerarius* (as cited by *Brandt*) hath long ago, and upon just grounds, assured the world, "That there is no reason to say, that diversity of opinions in religion is prejudicial to civil government; (o) whereas on the contrary, it is then only

(o) The noted *W. Penn* (a man of sense and learning, however eccentric in some things) spoke a truth founded upon the experience of all ages, when in a letter to Lord *Orrery* he asserted, "That diversities of faith and worship contribute not to the disturbance of any place [or country,] where moral uniformity is barely requisite to preserve the peace". — And it was with respect to the peace and tranquillity of the civil community that the wise and considerate Lord Ch. *J. Hale* set down this as one of his rules in administering justice, viz. "That I be not too rigid in matters purely conscientious; where all the harm is diversity of judgement". *Life by Dr. Burnet*, p. 59. See a good remark to the same purpose in Dr. *G. Reynolds's* hist. essay, p. 202. — To settle all matters of this kind upon a just and equitable footing, let it be but fairly considered, that, being frail and fallible mortals, surrounded with prejudices of various sorts, it is not always in our power

only hurtful to a political society, when  
any one, not content with the liberty of  
his

to adjust our opinions as we should do, and as right  
reason, and impartial regard to truth, would direct us  
to do, if we duly attended to it, with the tempers that  
become us. "It is not in the wit, or in the power of  
man, or rather it is an impossibility (as a very sen-  
sible and candid writer justly remarks) to prevent di-  
versity of opinions, since this is the unavoidable result  
of human imperfections and human liberty, and is not  
to be removed, unless we had more light, or less a-  
gency". *Dr. Jortin, remarks on eccl. hist. pref. p. 13.*  
— It was undoubtedly upon these and the like con-  
siderations, that a peaceable synod of the reformed in  
*Poland* (towards the close, as I take it, of the 16th cen-  
tury) came to this discreet resolution, viz. "To allow  
every one to believe as he should see reason, and as his  
conscience should direct him; contenting themselves  
with this reflection, That at the last day, it will  
appear, Who had been in the right, Who had acted  
faithfully, and Who otherwise". — We likewise find  
that not long before this, the states of *Holland* very  
laudably declared their opinion, "Not only that all  
religions ought to be tolerated, but that all restraint in  
matters of religion, was as detestable as the *inquisition*  
itself. And accordingly they maintained, That no-  
body erred wilfully, or could believe against his con-  
science: [Which alone, with persisting to disseminate  
such contradictions to conscience, is *heresy*, in the apo-  
stle's sense.] That no religion is acceptable to God,  
but such as proceeds from a willing heart. Experience  
had also taught them, That heterodox opinions could  
not so effectually be rooted out by any human power,  
or violence, as by length of time". *Brandt's hist. ref.*  
*b. 10. p. 308, 309.* Q. How came the states after-  
wards to vary from these good rules, when they gave  
way.

his own sentiments, becomes troublesome to his neighbours on that account". *Annot. to hist. b. 8.* — And the same observation will hold with regard to ecclesiastical society also. The larger the foundation, the stronger and safer it will be, and the more productive of peace. — Surely some ecclesiastical governors in former times were over-rigid in their measures, as they were unsuccessful in their attempts, when they did all they could to narrow, rather than enlarge the limits of church-communion. Bishop *Cofins*, we are told, was for having our ecclesiastical constitution in all its parts supported with rigour. Bishop *Wilkins* was for moderation, telling him, that he took himself to be in reality a better friend to the church in this respect than his

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way to importunities to convene a synod at *Dart* — to contravene the cause of liberty.

I shall conclude this note with the sedate judgement of the learned *Dr. Hen. More*; which I am persuaded is well founded, and may be safely followed in any community. "He thought, that all persons making conscience of their ways, and that were themselves peaceable, and for granting liberty unto others, ought to be borne with, till God shall give greater light". (*Life*, p. 171.) And surely none can have a just title to liberty for themselves, who are not free to allow the same to others. — *Give and take*, is a fair rule: Do as you would be done by, is of unalterable obligation.



his lordship. " For, while You, my lord,  
 " said he, are for setting the top on the  
 " piqued end downwards, you will not  
 " be able to keep it up any longer than  
 " you continue whipping and scourging;  
 " whereas I, says he, am for setting the  
 " broad end downward, and then it will  
 " stand of itself". *Life of Mr. Howe*,  
 (1724) p. 33, 34.

3. ARCHB. Bramhall judged, " that  
 the christian faith and liberty are then most  
 in danger, when so many things are crowd-  
 ed into confessions, that what should be  
 practical, (p) becomes purely a science,  
 of a rule of life, a useless speculation, of  
 a thing easy to be understood, a thing hard  
 to be remembered; that it was the in-  
 terest, of the protestant church, to widen  
 her bottom, and make her *articles* as cha-  
 ritable and comprehensive as she could;  
 that those nicer accuracies that *divide* the  
 greatest wits in the world, might not be  
 made the characteristics of reformation,  
 and give occasion to one party to excom-  
 municate

S 3

(p) The confession of faith drawn up by Episcopus  
 was reckoned the more valuable, because it contained  
 so many things concerning the *practice* of religious duties,  
 which did not appear in other confessions. *Abr. of Brandt's*  
*hist. ref.* p. 658.

municate and censure another". *Biogr. Brit.* vol. 2. 962.

4. BISHOP *Sanderfon* also concurs in the like judgement and moderation, in his tract concerning the means of preserving unity of faith and charity in the christian church. — His rules are these. 1. "Particular churches should be as tender as possible in giving their definitions and determinations in difficult and disputable points; not binding the members determinately either to the affirmative or negative of any such point; especially where there may be admitted a latitude of dissenting, (q) without any prejudice done either to the substance of the catholic faith, or to the tranquillity of the church, or to the salvation of the dissentient. — 2. "When at any time it shall be thought needful for those churches to determine any point in synod, they should proceed no farther in their

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(q) Such a latitude, for certain, there ought to be in all declarations of this kind, especially where it is thought proper to require subscriptions to them. The design of the *Lambeth* articles having been declared to be, the *appeasing of quarrels* between dissentients, Mr. *Playfere* very pertinently subjoins, "If for the appeasing of quarrels, it was wisdom so to pen them, as they might satisfy and unite all sides with common and general truth". *App. evang.* p. 15.

their determinations than the present necessity obliges them; not requiring men (especially in points of lesser consequence) to give either by *oath* or *subscription*, or other like means, their express positive *assent* to such determinations; but permitting them to enjoy their own *private opinions* in their own private bosoms, so long as they keep them to themselves, and do not, by venting them unseasonably, disquiet the *peace of the church therewith*."

5. We find that *Q. Elizabeth*, in 1562, ordered, "That the Lord's-prayer, the articles of faith [contained in the creed], and the ten commandments, should be openly read unto the people by ecclesiastical persons, to the intent that all her people, of what degree or condition soever, might learn how to call upon God, and know what duty they owed both to God and man". *Pref. to the homilies*. — We may here observe, that these three general heads, the creed, the decalogue, and the Lord's-prayer, were then judged to comprehend the sum and substance, or all the principal points, of religion and duty. Might not then a declaration of these, and subscription to them, as containing the sum total of religious instructions necessary to be delivered to the people, have been thought



sufficient to be required of persons undertaking the pastoral charge? This being a large foundation, would have been the ground of general satisfaction, and of much peace and tranquillity in the church; nor would any have scrupled subscription to such heads. — That was a discreet, candid, and peaceable man, who in a time of rancorous disputes about religion, made the following modest proposal for peace and friendly accommodation: “Peradventure our common creed, with the Lord’s prayer, and the ten commandments, might be impositions sufficient for the union of christians and churches”. And he illustrates and enforces his proposal in this manner. “Let the ministers of the gospel be obliged to declare their faith in, and assent to, no more than those three summaries of christianity. Let them not be obliged to subscribe to a multifarious number of articles, or to profess a faith or consent to them. Let them heartily believe those *few great things*, and reduce their faith to *practice*, and persuade their several congregations to do so; and this (he adds with true judgment) will be a more effectual way of producing and preserving *peace and union*, than any *other way or means whatsoever*, and with less mischief and inconveniences”. *Samaritan*, 1682, p. 63.

COIV. FINALLY, If any tests, of the faith or opinions of persons to be intrusted with the care of souls, be really necessary or expedient, Would it not seem best that such tests or confessions should be set forth in exprefs words of *scripture* only?

1. SOME objections, I know, have been made to this, but they are all of little moment, when well considered. The whole of christian divinity, both in point of *faith* and *practice* (and both, in such summaries, should always go together, and never be disunited) may, I am very sure, be clearly and sufficiently exhibited in a very narrow compass, and that to the full satisfaction of all reasonable and unprejudiced men. These chief points, being regularly set down under proper heads, would be a sufficient rule for the clergy to go by, both in the matter and order of their instructions to the people; and some declarations to this purpose might reasonably be required of them, before their admission into the ministry, or taking upon them the charge of that weighty office.

2. As to such a clear and comprehensive view of the christian religion, and the feasibility of drawing it out to proper advantage, we need only look into Dr. Wor-

thington's

*Hington's* scripture-catechism (to mention no other such specimens now :) Of which catechism, Bishop *Fowler*, a very competent judge, observes; that it is composed "with excellent judgement, being made to consist of *all* the most necessary and important points of religion, and of none other. Nor, he adds, hath the author taken the liberty to express any one doctrine, whether relating to faith or manners, in words of his own invention, but hath delivered all in plain words of *scripture*, according to the apparent sense of them, without misapplying any". So that here we have, as the Bishop farther notes, "the main body and substance of *simple, pure christianity*, without the adulterations and spurious mixtures, he says, of what a very excellent doctor calls, *man-made divinity*". Pref.

3. If then these adulterations and spurious mixtures (with which confessional tests are too commonly clogged) be really hurtful, be really disgraceful, as in many respects they are, to true religion, and ought therefore to be discarded from it; and if the main body and substance of *simple pure christianity* may be, and hath several times been discreetly and successfully drawn up from the scripture only, without any such adulterations and mixtures;



tutes; it may be reasonably asked, What have christian divines to do more or farther, than to teach this simple, pure christianity, as thus briefly pointed out to them, and as set forth and exemplified more at large, and more illustriously, in that sacred volume, from whence this and the like summaries are so judiciously extracted? Can more be well desired than this? or can any greater or better security be given to the church, for the instruction of its members in the religion of Christ, than this amounts to?

4. We find that wise and considerate men, of different denominations in the protestant community, have long agreed in this observation, — that articles of religion, for whatever purposes they may be designed, are best delivered in *scripture-words*.

5. The last rule for preserving of concord among us is, that every one keep himself within the bounds of the *word of God*; that he profess himself the disciple of none but Christ; and propose no other doctrine to be followed by him, but that which is expressed in the *holy scriptures*; that is, that he speak no other wise than they speak, nor deliver any other opinions, than what

what are plainly delivered in the holy *scriptures*: but that we all follow both the *words* and the *matter* therein contained. For this the christian faith, of which we make profession, requires us to do". *Jerom Zanchy*, in his oration to his fellow-protestants at *Strasburg*. Opp. tom. 7.

6. "To me, saith the learned and pious *Acontius*, nothing seems more advisable (in order to peace and union) than that a confession of faith, which is to be used as a creed, should not only contain nothing but what is necessary to be known, what is most true and certain, and thorowly attested by the holy scriptures; but also, that it should contain nothing but what is expressed (as far as may be) in those very *words* and forms of speaking, which the holy spirit made use of". *De satanae strat.* l. 7. p. 335.

7. "Some have thought (saith the learned historian of the reformation in the low-countries) that the safest and most effectual way to unite protestants under the benefit of a reasonable liberty, would be, to follow the path of *F. Junius* in this matter, and draw up a confession in pure *scripture-terms*; since such a confession would be liable to fewer objections than any other.

other. — Let there be but such a confession composed, as comprehends nothing else but such simple points as are necessary to salvation, — and couched in plain *scripture* words and phrases, and then we may be assured, that no body would easily oppose, nor attempt to make any alterations in it. — But the making and canonizing other human forms, has produced not only many errors, but likewise a tyrannical violation of conscience. *Annot. to bish. b. 6.*

— By the way, you may see in the same page, and under the same head, a shrewd but true observation made by the famous *M. Ant. de Dom.* concerning confessions and articles of faith, and the great hurt they have done to the reformation. “ These long and tedious confessions, (which contain the decision of many theological controversies, and cannot be embraced nor proposed as rules and formularies of faith) that began to be published in almost all the reformed churches, in order to put an end to the differences which arose in some or other particular church, are nevertheless, and always will be [N. B.] *the principal causes of schism.* ”

§ 1. “ The principal thing to be pressed and inculcated [in regard to theological points of difficulty and difference] is, That

we



we ought to have a certain and set rule to speak by, and that it were good to refrain from all novel expressions, and to confine the liberty of prophesying to such forms and phrases, as the holy scriptures furnish us with". *Letter from bishops Usher, Bedell, and Richardson, to Mr. John Dury, 1634.*

9. "THOSE creeds are best, which keep the very words of scripture; and that faith is best, which hath greatest simplicity". *Bp. Taylor, lib. of proph; sect. 2.*

10. "By keeping to scripture-revelation, we shall declare our faith in a form of sound and safe words: but if we go beyond those sacred records for our creed, there may quickly be as many symbols of faith, as there are fond and ambitious innovators". *Bp. Burnet, exp. artic. 1.*

11. "As to points of faith peculiar to christians, I do not see how any thing can be more reasonable, than that all should be accounted christians, who profess the points, properly called the points of christian faith, in the words in which they were delivered, and now are expressed, in the *New Testament* itself". *Bp. Hoadly, vol. 2. serm. 2.*

12. THE author of the *Catholic Gate-chism* (being an explanation of the creeds, the ten commandments, the Lord's prayer, and the two sacraments, in the express words of scripture only) speaks very well to this purpose, as becomes a sensible man, and catholic christian. "If, saith he, we believe, as we all profess to do, that the *word of God* contains the compleat and only rule of our faith and practice, I cannot see how we can be better instructed herein, than in God's own words. In these, it is to be hoped, christians of all denominations will acquiesce, and be content to express themselves, how different soever their interpretations may be; which will do much towards putting an end to our unhappy divisions, by making us all speak the same language in religion. Whence is it that so many controversies have sprung, which have so greatly infested, and so lamentably divided the christian church in all ages, but from the imposing creeds, and the explaining doctrines, in words not scriptural? whereas, had all the articles of our faith been comprised in some *scripture* form of sound words, as the things to be practised and prayed for are, we should have had no more disputes about our creeds, than about the ten commandments, the  
 Lord's

Lord's prayer, and the two sacraments".  
*Dedic.* 1717.

13. To the same purpose, and very properly, speak the remonstrants in Holland, having observed the ill consequence of departing from scripture-words in confessional forms. "Some men talk of an orthodox confession, and of a confession that is heterodox. The confession which they call orthodox, is expressed in pompous words not to be found in the scripture; and the heterodox confession is made up of the *very words* of the scripture. God and Christ do not require words invented by men, but a pious and christian life". *Ann. of Brandt's hist.* p. 452.

14. "PROFECTO rei christianæ probè fuisset consultum, si primæva illa brevis atque simplicitas [professionum fidei] etiamnum valeret, & dogmata illa præcipua, ipsius *sacra scriptura* verbis concepta, nullis interpretum cavillationibus vexata, aut malignitate in sinistram detorta". *J. Burton, S. T. P. de fundamentalib. dissert. theol.* 1756, p. 26. — Videfis *Episcopi* concion. 2. de incredulit. Judæor.



## S E C T. XII.

*Several forms of subscription, occurring in printed and other records; submitted to consideration.*

**W**E have some small gleanings of this kind among the records of our reformation. As,

1. A form of protestation to be subscribed unto by the ministers at their possession-taking, or first entry into their cures, enjoined by authority, &c. 1550.

THREE of the articles to be subscribed were these. — I. I promise in mine own person to use and exercise the ministry, and my christian office in my rank and place, chiefly and before all things unto the honour of almighty God, and our only sa-

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viour

viour Jesus Christ; with loyal obedience to our sovereign the Queens majesty, for the salvation and best quiet of her highness subjects within my charge: And thus teaching and living in true concord and unity. II. I protest to observe, keep and maintain all such orders with uniformity of all externe policy, rites and ceremonies of the church, as by the law, good usages and orders are already established and provided: And shall read divine service audibly, plainly and distinctly, that all the people may hear and understand. III. I shall move and keep the parochians to peace, to the uttermost of my power, in doctrine and conversation". *Strype's annals*, vol. 1. ch. 11.

2. A brief confession of faith extracted from a larger one drawn up and subscribed by a set of pious divines in the diocese of Peterborough, and under the inspection of their diocesan, in the year 1571. — We content ourselves with the simplicity of the pure word of God, and doctrine thereof, written in the canonical scriptures of the old and new testament. A summary abridgement of which, we acknowledge to be contained in the confession of faith used of all christians, which is commonly called, The creed of the apostles; holding fast,

as the apostle warneth, that faithful word, which serveth for doctrine and instruction; and that, both to edify our own consciences unto salvation in Christ Jesus, as the alone foundation whereon Christ's true church is built; and also, to exhort others with the same sound and wholesome doctrine, and to convince the gainers. Finally, to try and examine, and also to judge thereby, as by a certain rule, and perfect touchstone, all other doctrines whatsoever. And therefore, to this word of God, we humbly submit ourselves in all our doings, willing and ready to be judged, reformed, or further instructed thereby, in all points of true religion". *Annals, vol. 2. b. 1. ch. 10.* — To the foregoing we may subjoin,

3. A form or declaration compiled from the body of the articles of the church.

"I sincerely believe that holy scripture (by which I mean all the canonical books thereof, as received and allowed by the church of England, in her sixth article) containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation,



"I believe also, with equal sincerity, that the promises and declarations of God are in such wise to be received and believed by us, as they are generally set forth in holy scripture; and, that in all our doings, that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared to us in the word of God.

"I believe further, that it is not lawful for the church, or for any man or men whatsoever, so to expound one place of scripture, that it be repugnant to another; or to decree any thing against the same, or contrary to God's written word". *Free and candid disquisitions* (2d. ed. 1750) ch. 10. note (o) where some observations are subjoined, which it may not be improper to set down here, viz.

"Is in addition to these declarations, it should be required of every subscriber, to declare his sincere intention (in words either drawn up by the governors, or, if they should think better to allow it, in words of his own) to study the sacred scriptures with an honest mind, to endeavour to understand them in their true sense, and to instruct the people in the same (in a peaceable manner, and with an upright conscience) according to the best of his know-

knowledge and abilities; Would not such a declaration as this, made in terms sufficiently clear and strong, answer all the good ends proposed, by declaring and subscribing in any other form? Or can any other subscription, tho' to a thousand articles, do more in effect, so as to answer the great design of christianity, and the wise and peaceable design of any church, than this single expedient managed with due discretion, seems likely to do? Our present articles, which are numerous, have not the desired effect; nor is it to be expected that they should. — It is in a manner impossible [they should have the effect at first intended] at least in the present age; wherein free inquiry into the sense of scripture, being allowed and encouraged (as it certainly ought to be) it will be in vain to hope to tie down men of large minds, to any narrow sentiments, or to systems drawn up in an age of less discernment and improvement.

4. A short form taken from a collection of private manuscripts.

"I subscribe to the sixth article of the church of England, as a primary and governing article; upon which the whole weight and consistency of the protestant

religion is founded: And to the rest of the thirty-nine articles, as subordinate to this great article, and to be wholly governed by it" [viz. as referring all ultimately to the determination of scripture, the only rule of faith to christians.]

Query, whether the foregoing, or the like, may not be reasonably supposed to be the general sense, in which the more judicious part of the clergy do subscribe the 39 articles?

WHAT bishop *Pearson* and lord *King* say of the apostles creed, may, *mutatis mutandis*, be properly applied to those articles. — c. gr.

"WHATSOEVER is delivered in the (39 articles,) We therefore believe, because it is contained in the *scriptures*, and consequently must so believe, as it is contained THERE". And, "Where the church assigns no proof from scripture, she leaves us to private judgement". Bp. *Pearson* on the creed, art. 5.

"EVERY man's private judgement of the sense and meaning of the (39 articles,) is to be tried and determined by the holy *scriptures*, the only perfect and infallible rule



rule of faith; by which even these *articles themselves*, and every explication thereof, must be tried and judged; and they are no farther to be received, than as they are consonant and agreeable thereunto; which is according to the sixth article of the church of England. *King's crit. hist. of the creed; pref.*

It is rightly said by Dean Pierce; "*Ecclesie credendum propter Scripturam*", and no otherwise. (*Pacificat. c. 2. sect. 4.*) And it would have been equally true, if he had said, *Ecclesie subscribendum, &c.*

Now suppose that instead of the 39 articles, the church had ordered the apostles-creed to be subscribed; you see in what sense these three great men would have subscribed it. — And by this rule, after all, are we to form our judgement concerning that long controverted point, of the *authority* of the church in matters of faith. "The church, according to the earliest apologists of those times, hath authority in deciding controversies of doctrine, yet so that Itself must be over-ruled by the authority of the *word*. — Altho' authority be committed to the church to judge and determine of doctrines, &c. yet is this authority fast tied to the direct rules

of the world". See more in the *annals* before referred to, vol. 1. ch. 28. under the year 1562.

The first subscribers however, as you there find, did set their hands to the 39 articles, to signify that they believed them to be all true and orthodox. *Nos archiepiscopi & episcopi utriusque provincie regni Angliæ, in sacra synodo provinciali legitime congregati, recipimus & profitemur, & ut veros atque orthodoxos, manuum nostrarum subscriptionibus approbamus;* 29, Jan. A. D. 1562.]

(1) 5. The compilers of the articles having said, in the 35th article, *The homilies contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times*, archdeacon St. George (exam. of cand. p. 246) delivers his sense of the matter in these words; "That is, for the times when the homilies were set forth; But Now, adds he, the case is much altered from what it was Then". — This cannot and (I suppose) will not be denied by any who duly understand the difference in these respects, between the present times, and those wherein the articles and homilies were compiled. And doth not this observation suggest to us another? viz. concerning a form of subscription

scription different from that which is now enjoined; and more suitable to the present times and occasions; which, in regard to these matters, are so greatly altered from the former, and seem therefore to require some more commodious regulation in this respect. In the mean time, candid men will perhaps judge, that this, or a similar form may, with sufficient safety and propriety, answer such a purpose; *viz.*

"I subscribe to these articles as a set of pious declarations, honestly intended by the compilers for the service of religion in the church of England, and suitable to the times wherein they were compiled" (r).

**THAT**

(r) "In this sense, and no other (bishop Overall tells us) do our ministers *subscribe* unto the homilies", *viz.* not as being exact compositions, and in all respects unexceptionable; but as containing *wholesome lessons* for the people in those times. — Just so were the articles *wholesome lessons*, and summaries of necessary points, in the same times. The bishop acknowledges, that these popular instructions (the homilies) "were wrote in *haste*, and have many *scapes* in them, tho' they contain in *general* many *wholesome lessons*, for the purpose for which they were at first designed. These *scapes*, as Overall calls them, must in reason be interpreted favourably. Else how can the objectors themselves subscribe them? It was objected, about the time of the restoration, that the *homilies* call the *apocrypha* the *teaching of the holy Ghost*. To which Dr. Savage (chap-

lain



THAT they were suitable to those times;  
cannot be doubted by any who are well

ac-

lain to the king) gave this answer (which may perhaps be the only one that can well be returned) viz. "The book of homilies speaks according to the common language of *those times*, which so spake of them". *Reasons against reforms*, 1660, p. 2. — Bp. Burnet also acknowledges, that in these discourses "the *scriptures* are often applied, as they were *then* understood; not so *critically*, as they have been explained *since* that time". *On art. 35*. — By the way, we may suppose, that the sense in which the *compilers* understood the scriptures, was the sense in which they would have their articles as well as homilies to be *subscribed*: And would they have rejected those who would have subscribed in any other? Would the *critical* sense, as now generally adopted, have then passed? If, as Dr. Bennet says, the compilers did not *understand* the true sense of St. Paul in their eleventh article (and Bp. Burnet, concedes as much,) are we supposed to assert by our subscription, that they *did* understand him in the true sense? If not in *that*, in *what* sense? — The 34th canon says, that candidates for orders must confirm the account they give of their faith according to the articles, "by sufficient testimonies out of the holy scriptures". The compilers have supplied us with none of those testimonies, excepting in two or three places; and in the 8th article, they only refer to the scripture in general, as proving the contents of it "by most certain warrants", without exhibiting, or pointing to, any particular passages: which some may look upon as doing nothing, tho' others may consider it as a discreet forbearance. To furnish us however with sufficient testimonies to this purpose, Mr. Welchman and others have given us some specimens of this kind: Whether to the real advantage of students preparing for holy orders, or to the honour of the sacred scriptures,

acquainted with the history of them. —

*Sed alia tempora, alia postulant regimina.*

Nor

tures, thus cut out into shreds, and delivered by pieces-meals, has been doubted by friends to true scriptural knowledge, who rather think the free pursuit of such knowledge to be hereby checked and perverted; whilst others look upon such proofs as unsatisfactory, and of no other use or efficacy, but to give young men a wrong turn at their first setting out by habituating them to make the word of God subservient to the word of man, and to call it forth in support of any positions they shall happen to approve. — Surely this is a preposterous way of proceeding, to begin with system, and end with scripture; first to lay down conclusions from the former, and then seek for premises in the latter. — As to *subscription*, we find that even in the more early days of it, some liberties were taken by subscribers in regard to the sense, making grains of allowance, out of candid judgement, where they could not so thorowly approve of certain expressions or definitions in some particular articles. Thus the indices of the *Admonition*. “For the articles concerning  
“the substance of doctrine, vRING a godly interpretation  
“in a point or two, which are either too sparsely, or  
“els too darkely set downe, we were and are ready,  
“according to dvile, to subscribe vnto them”. They style them, *Articles of religion which only concerne the true christian faith, and the doctrin of the sacraments, comprised in a booke imprinted, &c.* And these are represented, and ordered to be subscribed, as containing *true and godly christian doctrine*. Which was the character given of the *homilies*, and we may presume that both those treatises are to be subscribed in the same sense. — Upon the whole, it is fit that every one should satisfy his own mind; and “happy is he who condemneth  
“not himself in that which he alloweth”. *Rom. xiv. v. 22.*

Nor is such a subscription as this unprecedented. In the year 1563, the learned and consciencious professor of divinity at *Strasburg*, being gravelled with some of the articles of the *augustan* confession, to which he was required to subscribe, hesitated and expostulated upon the subject for some time, but at last, upon mature consideration, and for the sake of peace, consented, and was allowed, to subscribe in the following words;

*Hanc doctrinae formulam ut piam agnosco:  
Ita etiam recipio ego, Hieronymus Zanchius.*

—*Strype's* life and acts of Archbp. *Grindal*. b. 1. ch. 8. See the account of Mr. *Beaumont's* Subscription, in the *Confessional* (2d. ed.) p. 145, note c. See more in *Whiston's* three Tracts, 1742, p. 13.—22.

6. DR. *Tim. Puller*, in his book intitled, "The moderation of the church of England"; Lond. 1679, gives us an exemplar, as he styles it, of that moderation, taken by him, we may suppose, out of the registers of subscriptions in the offices of some of our bishops, and by them approved and admitted.

*Ego — curatus — cui licentia prædicandi  
verbum Dei concedenda est, sacras literas purè*



*Et sincere tractabo, easque prudenti simplicitate populo exponam, nec in sermonibus meis de rebus jam constitutis suscitabo controversas, nec spargam contentiones, neque innovationem ullam doctrinæ vel ceremoniæ suadebo.*

I make no observations upon this form, but proceed to another, which may be found in an "Essay on imposing and subscribing articles of religion, by *Philoleutherus Cantabrigiensis*". Lond. 1719 (s).

7. *Tu fideliter promittes, te nihil cionaturum, nisi quod è sacris scripturis probari posse persuasum habueris; te regi fidem fore, & ecclesiam non perturbaturum:* Which the editor englishes thus:

"You shall faithfully promise, that you will preach nothing but what you are persuaded may be proved out of the holy scriptures; that you will be faithful to the king, and will not disturb the church".

"I have been told, says that gentleman,

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(s) The author was the ingenious and free spirited Mr. *Herne*, chaplain to the duke of Bedford. See in *Masters's hist. of C. C. C.* vol. 2.

man, that this form has already been accepted of a learned foreigner, as an equivalent for subscription to the 39 articles, by a right rev. bishop, who never was suspected of not being exactly orthodox". p. 32.

I make no observations upon this form, but proceed to another, which may be found in an Essay on Imposture and Impostors, by the same author.

**S E C T.**

## S E C T. XIII.

*Some farther remarks on subscriptions.*

THE different opinions, so long and often ventilated, concerning subscriptions, are impossible to be adjusted upon any other footing than that of scripture; nor can they be brought to a fair conclusion and acquiescence on all sides, but by referring wholly to scripture, and resting upon it as the ultimate criterion of every difficulty upon this head. Whoever looks into *Playfere's* "*appello evangelium*", will be convinced of this: Where it appears, that even in the more early days of our reformation, men of the greatest note and authority among the divines of the church of England, varied egregiously about the sense of several of her articles. In what sense then did they subscribe?

For,



For, that they all did subscribe, is certain. And in what sense can it be supposed that the moderns do? To be sure, every man in his own sense, if in any. Those who espouse *Calvin's* sentiments, must be thought to subscribe in a sense agreeable to his system. And yet, of that great leader it hath been observed, that he expounded scripture as he thought proper, and very differently from others. Hear *Episcopi*us: "It has been always lawful in the christian church, to explain differently some obscure passages in the holy scripture. No body has done this more freely than *Calvin* himself: for he has put upon some hundreds of passages, a different sense from that of the ancient fathers, and even upon some passages which concern the doctrine of the trinity, and of the divinity of Christ". *Abr. of Brandt's hist.* p. 346, &c. — And at the synod of *Dort*, our divines could determine nothing positively concerning the sense of some of our articles, and therefore referred the points in debate to the decision of the R<sup>e</sup> R<sup>re</sup> fathers of our church at home: p. 467. And yet Mr. *Playfere* seems to think, nay, he expressly says, that the 17th article in particular "had not been understood, and may not yet be fully apprehended, even by great prelates". *App. evang.* p. 367. The in-  
ference

ference with regard to the subscription of the inferior clergy in such a case is obvious; nor need we doubt, but many of them were, and many are still, under considerable dilemma's. The remedy is not less obvious than the difficulty. But (what may we flatter ourselves that we shall be so happy as to see that remedy applied?)

*Playfere* suggests farther, "that too great a defection and departure had been made by many in this church, from the doctrine and discipline of it, since the days of king *Edward the VIth*. when both were first established; and also since the happy reign of queen *Elizabeth*." *Introduct.* Many moderns, who have not been much conversant in the writings of the former of these two reigns, seem to think, that the calvinistic tenets prevailed here even then. But I could shew, if it were needful, that the sentiments of our first reformers upon such points, were generally larger and better. I am sure, in the main, less exceptionable. The narrower notions came in afterwards, being imbibed from the dictates of *Calvin* and others.

But do you imagine, that those who adhered to *Calvin* and his associates, were all of a mind in regard to their sentiments?

or that all who subscribed to the *Dort*-  
canons, did thorowly approve of them?  
I find it otherwise, and we shall always  
find it otherwise, whatever forms, in the  
common way, are prescribed for subscrip-  
tion. Scarce any two men agree exactly  
in the sense wherein they subscribe this  
or that article. And who shall judge of  
their consciences respectively? Be these to  
themselves. They alone are answerable  
to God, for what they do, or decline to do,  
herein. Others should not intermeddle:  
Or if they do, they go beyond their sphere,  
and are answerable to the same God for  
the uncharitableness of their censures.  
What hast Thou to do, to judge the ser-  
vant of Another? He is not Thy servant,  
nor to be judged by thee. Leave every  
man to his own conscience, and to God,  
who is greater than his conscience and  
thine, and knoweth all things.

AND yet, I always say, and always shall  
say, that I do not, I cannot in reason,  
justify impositions in these matters. The  
imposers alone, if any, do or should best  
know, why they are pleased to continue  
them upon their dependents. It is plain  
to me, that some at least, perhaps many,  
who subscribed to the decrees of *Dort*,  
would gladly have been excused from sub-  
scribing.



scribing. "Whether any or all (said the appellant to *Cæsar*) subscribed absolutely, or with protestation, I cannot tell. Let them look to it, and answer for it, whom it doth concern. Of this I am sure; *John Deodate*, minister and professor in the church of Geneva, and imployed unto that synod of *Dort* from his country, being lately with me at Eton [*Mountagu* was fellow of that college,] professed there unto me his own opinion, in some points contrary to the professions of *Dort*; as also the dissention [the different sense] of their church at Geneva, from the private opinions (as he called them) of *Calvin* and *Beza*". *App. Cæs.* (1st. ed. 1625) p. 71.  
 — "'Tis certain (saith *Niellius* in a letter to *Hogerbeets*) that some professors have subscribed, with great remorses of conscience, things which they abhorred. I know it by their own complaints. I know also that *Dr. Vossius*, before the synod of *Dort*, spoke of several things otherwise than he has done since. Such is the deplorable slavery (t) occasioned by those synods".

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(t) *Milton* had a mean opinion of subscriptions. He said it was the same as writing, *Slave*. See his life by the best editor of his works, p. 3. Is a state of slavery an eligible situation? especially for divines, who have been

synods". *Barlaeus* says in one of his letters, "that when *Kassius* was deprived of his professorship, they forbade him to keep boarders, and teach them in his house. That learned man was afterwards made professor of rhetoric, tho' he refused to subscribe the canons of the synod of Dort, and to retract what the clergy condemned in his writings". *La Roche's* abridgement, p. 559.

WHEN we reflect on these passages, and the discouragements so frequently falling to the share of learned and ingenious men, upon the score of subscriptions, Can we forbear wishing they were generously and fairly dropped, and conscience and judgment left free? — To remove scruples, and give reasonable content to honest men of different persuasions; Would it not be an easy matter, and fitting too, to leave the sense of scripture, in all difficult and disputable points (where conscience alone is concerned) undecided? Take, for instance, THIS IS MY BODY. The Romanists

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been liberally educated, and have formed liberal sentiments, upon the best foundation. — "What a slavery", said *Episcopus*, with some displeasure, when he knew not how to refuse setting his hand to something insisted upon from him by the haughty and overbearing conventicle of *Dort*. *Abr. of Brandt's hist.* p. 439.

manists understand this expression in one sense; the Lutherans in another; the Calvinists in a different from both; and we know the sense in which our own church hath determined the matter. Now who shall decide here between the respective parties? or who hath proper authority to do so? Will you swear that your decision is right, and all the other opinions wrong?

(v) — "I can answer for it at the last day, said a well known popish commen-

U 3 tator,

(v) "Of themselves some pronounce, *We are capable of erring, yet we do not err.* But of others they cry out, *They can err, and do err.* But do we think they err? says *Bucer*. Why then do we not believe, that we ourselves may possibly err, even in those respects in which we imagine them to err? For nobody errs willfully, nor is any one, how holy soever he be, entirely free from error. — Even lovers of truth persuade themselves, that they see things in the scripture itself, which nevertheless no body else can find in it. However, whilst such mistakes and misapprehensions last, whilst the flesh takes so much pleasure in its fancies and fictions, very good men do often embrace and defend errors for truths, even in such a manner as zealously to oppose truth itself, whilst they are maintaining things that are false. — If any one in human affairs (saith *Jerinus*) differs from me in opinion, and wrongs me, I am requited, by the authority of the Lord, to forgive him; but he that differs from me in the business of faith, if he be mistaken, he does not wrong Me, but his own Master. Now if his Master forgives him, ought I not to do the same?" Vid. *Brutus's* dedication, divers times before cited.



tator, that the sense of our church, in this matter is right; and if God should then ask me, Why I embraced this opinion, I would with assurance say [an assurance indeed,] "*Tu docuisti*". — On the other hand, a learned doctor of our church, declared with no less confidence, (and, I think, with truth too, tho' at the same time with vehemence enough,) "*Upon my soul, there is no such turning of the bread into Christ's body as the papists affirm*". See in *Vines's* treatise of the sacrament, ch. 8.

You perceive from these and the like facts, how unequitable it is to determine for others, and that it is better not to be peremptory in your decisions. Others have a right to interpret as well as you: And will you debar them of this privilege? If you think they may mistake the sense, why may not you also mistake it? Is this impossible? or is it always improbable? Give your own sense, if you please, and nobody can blame you, if you do it modestly and peaceably. But if you impose your sense upon others, Who gave you authority to do so? And why may not those others, with equal right, impose their sense upon you? Which I am sure you would not like. Why then should you do to another, what you would dislike another should do to you?

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IN short, concerning such matters, the scriptures being left free, as they ought to be left, every man of common sense, and common honesty, comparing scripture with scripture, observing its phraseology, and the main intent of the whole, may be safely trusted to determine for himself (not for others) what may be the true original meaning and design of this or that disputable passage. Just liberty being allowed in such points, there would be more peace, and less contention. And what hath the civil government, or the ecclesiastical either, to do in such cases, but to preserve peace, as much as possible, between fellow-christians. As for truth, it will find its way by degrees, without the help of articles: which rather obstruct, than promote it.

MEANWHILE, subscriptions continuing in force, let every one satisfy himself, as well as he can, about his own act herein; and let others be content with theirs. Nor let either side (since I find there are parties) blame Me, who mean well to both, and to the public in general.

P. S. SINCE the penning of the foregoing remarks, some fresh publications have appeared, which seem to reflect dishonour upon the church of England (tho' not intended to do so) as being a church founded upon narrow party-principles, inconsistent with the noble latitude of the evangelical dispensation, disparaging to its design, and obstructive of its progress. — Great pains have been taken, to revive the old calvinistical doctrines, and call us back to the profession and inculcation of them, as being, it is asserted, the original doctrines of our reformed church of England. — All this ado is to little purpose, unless the abettors of those doctrines can at the same time prove to us (which I presume they never can) that they are the original doctrines of *scripture*, according to its plainest sense, analogy, and design throughout the whole. If *Monf. Calvin* (tho' a learned and well-meaning man) unhappily misunderstood the scriptures in certain passages and points of revelation, Are We obliged, in deference to his authority, to misunderstand them likewise, in such points and passages? — Let me only ask: Which is of greater authority, the word of God, or the word of that interpreter?



terpreter? And why may not the word of other interpreters, equally learned (perhaps also more judicious, and less prejudiced,) go as far as his? Or must Mr. *Calvin* be a perpetual dictator in doctrinals to the church of England, of which he never was a member, much less a father, and whom many of the fathers of this church have since disapproved and rejected, remanding him back to his own church at Geneva, there to prescribe and dictate at his leisure?

But if, after all, it be really true, as some zealous friends of his on this side the water will have it to be, that the sense (the only original and genuine sense) of the church of England, in her articles and other public forms, is to be sought for and found in *Calvin's* writings, and by them alone to be settled and adjusted in doubtful cases, it would seem reasonable, if not necessary, in such a turn of affairs, that the clergy of this church, who remain as yet unconvinced by the arguments of their opponents on this head, should join in a body, and apply to their ecclesiastical governors, to make a public declaration, confirming the assertion of those gentlemen, and assuring all the members of this church, that

that her doctrines in the points controverted, are purely and only calvinistical, and so to be taken and observed by all her members. Which done, let it be requested next, as in course it ought to be, that the writings of our great men, *Chillingworth, Tillotson, Barrow, Burnet, Stillingfleet, &c.* (even all the best productions of our most celebrated divines, of a different stamp from *Calvin*) may be called in, and suppressed, and those of *Calvin* reprinted by authority, and spread throughout the land, to undeceive the ministers and people of the church of England, and to be for the future as standards to both, and directories to point out and enjoin, what doctrine shall from henceforward be publickly taught and received in this church, as different from that of the great divines above-mentioned, and hitherto so much approved and revered in England. — Till this is done, it may be adviseable, that these modern revivers of the calvinistic theology, would be pleased to rest awhile, and be at peace; and that no members of the church of England, either clergy or laity, would consider this matter in any other light, for the present, than a difference in opinion about *human articles*, which may be understood in

in one sense or another, without any real detriment to *christianity*; this being still safe and sound, and the *bible* still continuing, as it is hoped it always will continue to be, *the religion, the only religion of*  
**PROTESTANTS.**

# **SECT.**



## S E C T. XIV.

*Concerning seasonable revisals of established forms.*

1. **S**IR *Fr. Bacon*, lord *Verulam*, lays it down for a rule, that "he who will not apply new remedies (when wanted) must expect new evils: And if time, says he, of course, alter things to the worse, and wisdom and counsel shall not alter them to the better; what shall be the end?" *Ess.* 24.

2. "BUT not to handle this matter like common place (still speaking of the revisals that his lordship apprehended to be wanted in our church) "I would only ask, Why the *civil* state should be purged and restored by good and wholesome laws made every third and fourth year in parliaments

liaments assembled, devising remedies as fast as *time* breedeth mischiefs, and [yet] contrariwise the *ecclesiastical* state should still continue upon the dregs of time, and receive no alteration now for these five and forty years and more? (u) But if it be said to me, that there is a difference between civil causes and ecclesiastical, they may as well tell me, that churches and chapels need no reparations, tho' castles and houses do; whereas commonly, to speak truth, dilapidations of the inward and spiritual edifications of the church of God are in all times as great, as the outward and material ones. — I, for my part, do confess, that in revolving the scriptures, I could never find any such thing, but that God hath left the like liberty to the church-government as he hath done to the civil government, to be varied according to time, and place, and accidents; which nevertheless his high and divine providence doth order and dispose. — If St. *John* were to indite an epistle to the church of *England* as he did to them of *Asia*, it would sure have the clause, *Habeo adversus te pauca*. — The church is not now to plant or build, but only to be pruned.

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(u) This was written about the beginning of the reign of king *James I.* being addressed to his majesty.

ned from corruptions, and repaired; and restored in some decays". *Considerations touching the church of England.*

3. THE King himself (viz. James I.) to whom those considerations were tendered, did in effect acknowledge, that things grow worse with *time*, and stand in need of seasonable reforms. "Experience, he said, did daily shew, that the church militant was never so well constituted in any form of policy, but the imperfections of men who had the exercise thereof, did with *time*, tho' insensibly, bring in some corruption". *Proclam.* 1603.

4. "WHEN the *evil* occasioned by the law, is greater than the *good* designed, or than the good which will come by it in the present constitution of things, and the evil can by no other remedy be healed; it concerns the lawgivers charity to take off such positive constitutions, which in the authority are merely human, and in the matter indifferent, and evil in the event". *Bp. Taylor's life of Christ, part 3. p. 334. &c.*

5. THE same rational and judicious casuist makes this other remark to the purpose, equally just, and meriting equal regard.



gard. "When ecclesiastical laws are made, they are relative to *time* and *place*, to *persons* and *occasions*, subject to all *changes*, fitted for *use*, and the advantage of churches; ministering to edification, and complying with charity. Now whatsoever law is made with these conditions, cannot be perpetual". *Ductor dubit.* vol. 2. b. 3. p. 303.

6. ANOTHER worthy prelate delivers his opinion upon the point before us, in these words: "He that shall say, that under our present settlements, all that is established is absolutely the best, and nothing can be amended, says more than our church does, and has a difficult proof *lies* on him. There is something (saith the church herself, in her office of commination) which is yet to be wished, and it is sufficient to say, that what is established, is as well as for the *time* it could be". *Bp. Wettenhall; treatise on prayer*, ch. 4. f. 7.

7. "WHATEVER party of christians shall make alterations in the present form, either of government or worship, it will be looked upon at least as a tacit confession that they have hitherto been in the wrong. (w) in some material points. If the

(w) *What*, said professor *Smyth*, being startled at the por-

the church of Rome should alter any thing determined by the council of *Trident*, they must give up her infallibility (x). On the

~~How much to union, and what was the other~~

progress of the reformation, "Hath Christe suffered his deare spote the churches (for which he shed his most precious blood) to erre in his religion and the faith; thus longe, the space of tw hundred yeres?" *Defence of the masse*, 1546, fol. 45. A wily argument, which has deceived many. *Where was your religion before Luther?* "It was there" (replied Sir H. Wotton to the papist) where yours was not; in the sacred scriptures. — "Have you washed your face, Sir, this morning?" said an arch fellow to a Jesuit at a coffee-house, in the reign of James II. Yes; and what then? Why then, Where was your face before you washed it?"

Protestants weaken their cause against popery, when they muster up similar arguments against reviews. Our reforming forefathers (they suggest) receded from popery as far as was necessary; and more than they did, is not fitting to be done now. The general answer of bishop *Cross* to this plea, seems sufficient, and may properly be applied to particular cases. We commend our forefathers for doing piously and wisely, and yet will not imitate them. They endeavoured to please and gain the people; We will needs displease and lose them. Certainly we cannot do our forefathers a greater honour, than to observe their rule of reason, to conform to the times. And they are grossly mistaken, who think it a dishonour to them, for us to take away what they have established, when we keep close to the reason wherefore they did establish it". *Naked truth* (1675 p. 23).

(x) "In the council of *Trident*, they concluded a-monge-

other hand, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, and the church of England, cannot alter their confessions of faith, articles, or liturgies in any material points, but it will be [thought] a reflection upon their first reformers, and also on themselves, who have so strictly required subscription to these confessions, articles, and liturgies, and have already declared them to be agreeable to the doctrine and practice of the primitive church, as well as to the holy scriptures. However, as the Lutherans, Calvinists, and church of England, do all con-

X  
 monge them selves, that no maner of thyng should be changed at al, that had bene once received in their Church". Bp. Juel's reply to Dr. Cole, 1560. "This infallible church acted here in character; but can protestant churches consistently make such a resolution? And yet, hear what hath been observed concerning a like resolution taken by the convention at Dorchester, by no means, as I take it, to their credit. "The English divines there declared, when the catechism of the synod was approved, that they did not believe that Christ's *descent into hell*, mentioned in the apostles creed, signifies that he *suffered the torments of hell upon the cross*. One would think (says *La Roche*) that strange explication should have been left out of the catechism; but when a thing, tho' never so unreasonable, has been inserted in such formularies, it must be preserved for ever and ever". *Abr. of Brandt's hist.* vol. 2. p. 512.

Thus we see,  
*Illecos intra muros pecantur, & extra.*



less that the church is fallible, and that (as the church of England teaches in her 21st article) "general councils may err, and sometimes have erred", therefore much more may the councils of one province, kingdom or nation, be liable to err; it would not be so great a reflection upon any of them, if upon a due examination and review of their doctrine and worship, they should find that they have been mistaken, even in some material points, as it would be for the church of Rome (which pretends to infallibility) if she should find herself mistaken. And certainly it is much more for the reputation of a church, which owns herself to be fallible, to rectify any mistake she shall be discovered to be guilty of, rather than to persist in it, and to maintain, against the clearest evidence, that she is not mistaken" (y). *Essay*

(y) It is a strange humour in many men, and what we too often observe in societies as well as in individuals, that they cannot bear to have it thought that they have been mistaken; and rather than confess a mistake, they will chuse to continue in their error. This humour is seen sometimes in smaller matters, as well as in greater; nor are men of great name and place exempt from it. We see one instance of it at least, in the complaint made by Archbp. *Whitgift* to Q. *Elizabeth* against the house of commons in 1584, as related by Dr. *Fuller* in his church-history under that year. "They have also, said

to procure catholic communion upon catholic principles : Lond. 1724.

8. YEAR.

said this great prelate, "passed a bill, giving liberty  
"TO MARRY AT ALL TIMES OF THE YEAR, WITH-  
"out restraint, contrary to the old canon continually  
"observed amongst us; and continuing matter, which  
"tendeth to the slander of this church, as having hitherto maintained an *error*." — Q. Did his grace then think, that this church could not err? or would he have it thought that it had not; or at least, that this church is less liable to err than other churches? — After all, what great matter would it have been for the church, to have dropped this odd prohibition, however ancient (being grounded, as he said, upon *old canon*) of forbidding marriage at certain times of the year, which God hath left free at all times? — As well might men of this turn and temper now insist, that our 72d canon (which forbids clergymen to *cast out devils*, without licence under the hand and seal of their respective dioceses) should, notwithstanding its glaring absurdity, and the general contempt thrown upon it, continue still upon the list, and by no means be dropped or altered. For, they may say in this case, as was said in the other, The canon is of long standing: This church has been in possession of it for above 160 years, and it would be a disgrace to the church now to give it up. Has the church (they may add) been so long in an *error*, and did not see it? — This single instance is enough to shew us the force and tendency of the common argument, and where it would end, if it was pushed home. Vid. *Wilkins Council*, vol. 4. p. 222.

As to old popish canons remaining still in force in this protestant kingdom, see *Johnson's collection*, gen. pref. sect. 19. — Had the *Restitutio legum ecclesiasticarum*, so discreetly drawn up by our first reformers, taken place, those

8. Very appositely to the preceding observations may we subjoin those of Dr. *Candler*, who earnestly wished the improvement of the church of England in every thing good and laudable, and the removal of every thing out of it, that is prejudicial to its true interest. Speaking of the common obstacles that stand in the way of such improvement and removal, he very justly takes notice, "That the reformation itself had never been brought about, if the fear of displeasing and offending men, the clamours of prejudice, the opposition of an ignorant, bigoted, and vicious clergy, [as many of them were in those times] the defamations of malice, and the love of ease and quiet, had been the only or principal considerations attended to. The scriptures had never been given us in our own language, if the learned and venerable translators of them had suffered (as they tell us) "the calumniations and hard interpretations of other men, their bitter censures

those old canons would have been abolished, and among the rest that which forbade marriage in Lent. Of which forbiddance bishop *Hoper* appears to have had but a mean opinion: (see his 7th serm. on Jonas, preached at court, 1550.) A different spirit succeeded in after-times. The first love waxed cold, the first zeal abated, and some former principles, none of the best, were re-adopted.



"sures and uncharitable imputations, to  
 "dismay them (z). Popish persons at home  
 "and abroad traduced them; and self-  
 "conceited brethren, who ran their own  
 "ways, and gave liking unto nothing but  
 "what was framed by themselves, and  
 "hammered on their anvils, maligned them.  
 "But in the glorious work they supported  
 "themselves within by the truth and inno-  
 "cency of a good conscience, having  
 "walked the ways of simplicity and inte-  
 "grity, as before the Lord".

The doctor goes on. — "Though there  
 may be some found, who will be against  
 making any concessions for the sake of  
 peace, who will reproach every alteration,  
 as an attempt to subvert the church, and  
 even wickedly calumniate those in highest  
 stations, for consenting to them, as ene-  
 mies to, and betrayers of it; yet wisdom,  
 patience, resolution, and the gradual expe-  
 rience of the benefits resulting to this  
 church from peace and union, will soon  
 overcome all objections and difficulties of  
 this kind. foreign protestant churches will  
 commend her christian moderation and  
 condescension; all good men at home will

(z) See their dedication to king James I.

rejoice to see our differences at an end, and they who are the happy means of healing our divisions, will have that rejoicing which flows from the testimony of their conscience, to their simplicity and godly sincerity; and though bad men may causelessly revile them, the best of all denominations will more highly esteem them, and distant posterity will bless their names, and their memorial will be honourable throughout all generations". *Case of subscription to explanatory articles of faith*, p. 180, &c.

DR. Chandler is seconded in these remarks by a later writer, a serious divine (a priest, as he styles himself) of the church of England; who, in his address to the Archbishops and bishops of his church, prefixed to his new edition of the book of Common-prayer, 1768, takes notice of the objection against a reform, drawn from the specious topic of *innovation*, which some persons have been weak enough to insist on. "The whole fabric of protestantism (this author observes) was an innovation. Might it not have been represented, in the early days of the reformation, that we had done well to continue in the unity of the then catholic church, notwithstanding her errors and corruptions, rather

rather than by departing from her communion to open a door to schism, spiritual libertinism, profaneness, and infidelity? But ought any attention to have been paid to such representations?" &c. — After all, what hath by some been called innovation, would in reality be but restitution, or reduction; a return to the original standard, the gospel-plan, by which all religious matters ought to be regulated in protestant churches.

9. As to the common obstructions to such good designs, they are sufficiently obvious, and the celebrated Mr. *Ostervald* has marked them out with freedom. To re-establish order where it is wanting, and remove the causes of the present corruptions of original christianity, "it would be requisite, he says, that princes and churchmen should act in conjunction. But there are few christian princes who lay this to heart; and divines have quite other things in their thoughts: Their great business is to maintain what is established, and to dispute with those who find fault with it. On the other hand, knowlege or resolution is wanting; and there is not enough of honesty or greatness of soul, to confess the truth. — It is thought by many persons, that all would be ruined, if the least alteration



teration was made. Some of those defects—  
are now become inviolable customs and laws.  
Every body fancies true and pure christi-  
anity to be that, which obtains in his  
country, or in the society he lives in; and  
it is not so much as put to the question,  
whether or not some things should be al-  
tered.

“ As long as christians are possessed with  
these prejudices, we must not expect to  
see christianity restored to an entire purity.  
But yet it is to be hoped from the grace  
of God, and the force of truth, that christi-  
ans will open their eyes at last; and that  
divines will grow sensible of the necessity  
of minding these things.

“ THE main point here, is to shake off  
all *prejudices*, and to consider things in their  
*nature* and *original*. — This would be the  
true way to reform abuses, and to draw near  
to perfection, and to bring things back  
into the natural and primitive channel.

*Causes of the present corruption of christians.*  
part 2. p. 271, &c.

SECT.

## S E C T. XV.

*A declaration against popery; drawn chiefly from the articles of the church of England.*

**I** A. B. do here freely and voluntarily declare my full and firm assent to the following propositions, which I have well considered, viz.

1. The bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England, nor in any other belonging to the same.

2. It is an impious, heretical, and damnable doctrine, that princes excommunicated or deprived by the pope, or any authority of the see of Rome, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or any other whomsoever.

3. THE

3. THE church of Rome hath erred, not only in her living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.

4. TRANSUBSTANTIATION (or the change of the substance of the bread and wine in the Lord's supper) is repugnant to the plain words of scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

5. THE cup in the Lord's supper is not to be denied to the lay-people: For both parts of that sacrament ought, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, to be administered to all christians alike.

6. THE two only sacraments ordained by Christ in the gospel, are baptism and the Lord's supper. Those five commonly called sacraments in the church of Rome (that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction) are not to be counted for sacraments of the gospel, nor to be observed as such by christians.

7. THE sacrifices of masses in the church of Rome, in which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the living and the dead, in order to have remission of



of pain and guilt, are blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.

8. THE Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, the worshipping of images and reliques, and the invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and repugnant to the word of God.

9. IT is also repugnant to that word, as well as to common reason, to the design of christian worship, and to the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer, or the ministration of the sacraments, performed in the church, in a tongue that is not understood by the people.

10. IT is lawful for bishops, priests and deacons, as for all other christian people, either to marry, or to continue unmarried, at their own discretion; as they shall judge either the one or the other state, to serve better to godliness, with regard to themselves respectively.

A. B.

ON particular occasions (of which the ecclesiastical governors are the proper judges) it may perhaps be deemed expedient, to require a verbal assent, and actual subscription, to the foregoing articles.

WHEN

WHEN we seriously reflect upon the present state of our affairs, in this and other very interesting respects, great reason have we to pray daily to almighty God, as we do one day in the year, "That our enemies, (of whatever kind) may never prevail against us, or triumph in the ruin of his church among us; but that our gracious Sovereign and his realms being preserved in God's true religion, and by his merciful goodness protected in the same, we may all duly serve him, and give him thanks in his holy congregation: — And that truth and justice, brotherly kindness and charity, devotion and piety, concord and unity, with all other virtues, may so flourish among us, that they may be the stability of our times, and make this church a praise on the earth" (a).

To which we may properly add, — "And grant, O Lord, that all our posterities after us, confessing thy holy name, professing thy holy gospel, and leading an holy life, may perpetually praise and magnify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord".  
*Extract from the last prayer at the end of the homilies.*

CON-

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(a) Office for the 5th. of November.

## CONCLUSION

**I**N the foregoing collection you have had presented to your view, a variety of observations tending to enlarge your thoughts of the christian religion, and to give you a just and amiable idea of it, in its true design, as laid down in those records, where alone it is found in its original purity, simplicity, and truth. — You have seen, in various instances (tho' they are not the hundredth part of what might be produced) how much this divine religion, the noblest boon of heaven to men, hath, from age to age, been corrupted and depraved, and perverted to heterogeneous purposes, by human inventions; being fitted up and accommodated, by art and industry and authority, to the several fancies, opinions, and preconceptions of speculative men; and, what is most of all to be lamented, made subservient to *secular interests*, and every device of human policy, which could advantage itself by it, and change it from a spiritual into an earthly kingdom. — You have also seen the sedate reflections, and warm remonstrances, of many wise and judicious persons on these heads, and the solid reasons they have offered for re-



examining, and fairly dismissing out of christian societies, whatever is inconsistent with this holy religion in its native verity, probity and plainness, and in its real design, efficacy, and tendency to reform and improve mankind in this world, in order to their happiness in the next.

You will now judge of the whole, according to the evidences which have been laid before you.

It must certainly be the will of providence, which so graciously favoured us with this revelation, and hath committed it to our keeping as a *sacred trust*, that we should at all times preserve it as much as possible in its genuine purity; and when we find it any way corrupted, or altered from that purity, that we should honestly endeavour to restore it to the original standard.

It is very evident to all discerning and unprejudiced men, that the christian religion gives no authority to any man, or to any body of men, to think and judge for *Others*, or to prescribe to them a system of doctrines or opinions, by which they shall regulate their notions in matters of faith, taking care to square them with exactness to that rule.

THIS

THIS is certain, that Christ, and he alone, is both the author and the finisher of the faith of christians; and no one can add the least title to it, or diminish, or alter, any article in it, without assuming an unwarrantable liberty, and investing himself with an authority which that supreme lawgiver hath reserved to himself alone, and hath never transferred to any mortal man.

NO MAN determinations therefore, tying men down to certain opinions and tenets, not expressly asserted in the sacred word, or not consistent with it in its true design and tenor, are to be considered as encroachments upon the christian scheme, injurious to its immunities, and detrimental to its interests.

THE consequence is, that christian liberty, and the right to exercise private judgement, and follow the dictates of reason and conscience in all matters of religious concernment, ought to be preserved inviolable to, and by every christian, and nothing retained, or required of any professing this holy faith, that may any way either discredit this religion, infringe its privileges, or impede its progress. — Give this religion its due freedom; continue, promote, and

and encourage that freedom, in and to all peaceable and conscientious persons, desirous to understand and obey the will of its divine founder, you will then do it the justice it deserves, and contention about it will cease, giving way to nobler principles and practices.— Finally, the gospel having regained its just liberty, and being allowed that free course which it was originally intended to have, will appear in its native light and lustre, and, proceeding gradually upon the strength of reason, speaking to every man's conscience, will, under the heavenly aid, not only recover the grounds it hath lost, but will at length run and be glorified throughout the world.

THAT this happy event may in God's good time be accomplished, is, and always will be, the earnest wish, faithful endeavour, and daily prayer (as our Lord hath directed) of every sincere christian.

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~~respectable and conscientious persons, de-~~  
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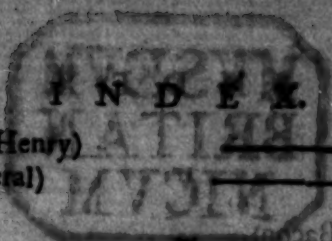
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ERRATA.

Page 96. line 26. read, *scibi lapsi deprehendimur.*  
 157. l. 22. after *they*, dele *punctum.*  
 170. last line but two, for *Mountague's*, read *Mountagu's*.  
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- I. Lady Moyer's Lectures for the Years 1764, 1765, with a Dissertation on the Logos, and two Tracts on Intermediatism.
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